

# PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE  
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

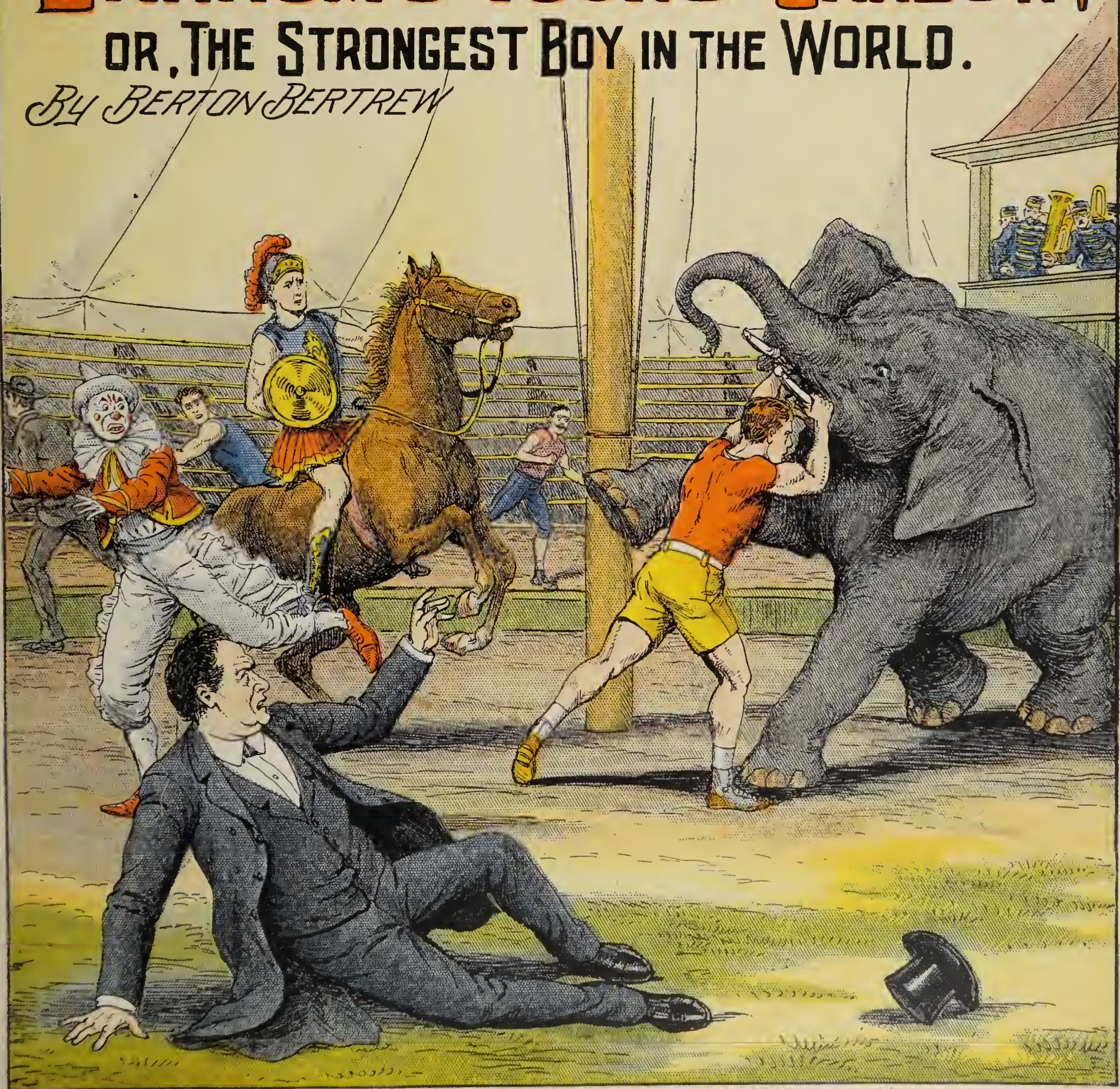
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NEW YORK, MAY 2, 1906.

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## BARNUM'S YOUNG SANDOW; OR, THE STRONGEST BOY IN THE WORLD. *By BERTON BERTREW*



A second more and Barnum's life would have been crushed out. Nothing could have saved him but that which now occurred. Dan, seeing his danger, made one quick rush for the elephant; seizing him by both stumps of its tusks, he checked the bulky brute.





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# Barnum's Young Sandow

OR,

## The Strongest Boy in the World.

**By Berton Bertrew.**

### CHAPTER I.

#### A MIDNIGHT MYSTERY.

"No, you can't go to the circus! Of course you can't! You must be crazy to think of it!"

"But, Mr. Maybrick——"

"But me no buts, boy. Get into the store there, and don't you dare to leave it till morning—d'ye hear?"

Whereupon Mr. Moses Maybrick, who enjoyed the reputation of being the "meanest man in Belleford," took an extra large pinch of snuff and shuffled away up the street in the direction of his home.

"Sour old skinflint," remarked Al Andrews, who was leaning against the big buttonwood tree in front of the store. "If I was you, Dan Lewis, I wouldn't stand it—no, I wouldn't, not a day!"

Moses Maybrick's handsome young clerk laughed shortly.

"Perhaps I won't stand it very long, Al," he said.

"Hello! Going to kick out of the traces, Dan?"

"I don't know what I may do."

"By gosh, you'll make the fur fly when you do start—you with your muscle!"

"Oh, pshaw!"

"Pshaw nothing! I believe you could knock out the strongest man in Barnum's Circus every time. He can't lift a horse, and I seen you do it, so I know."

"Oh, that's nothing, Al; it's all in how you take hold."

"Nothing! I like to hear you talk, Dan. Just as if you didn't know you were the strongest fellow in town—yes, like enough in the State."

"It just happens so."

"It is so. But say, it's a blame shame you ain't going to the show with me."

"Can't do it now, Al."

"Say, let old what's-his-name go to blazes and come along."

"Oh, no!"

"Why not? Just for once."

"It wouldn't be right, Al. Mr. Maybrick is my guardian, and I am in charge here."

"Oh, that be blamed! There ain't another store in town where a fellow has to work all day and night, too, as you do, Dan."

"I suppose that's so; but while I work for Mr. Maybrick I shall do my duty."

"Oh, you're the same old sixpence, Dan. You do too much. My father says that he believes old Maybrick has stolen all your property, and——"

"Nonsense, Al! My father didn't leave me anything. I owe everything I have to Mr. Maybrick, and even if he is mean and tyrannical, I'm determined to do the right thing until the final break comes."

"You're a blame sight too good for him, Dan; that's what you are! Well, I'm off for Barnum's show. Sorry you can't come, old boy; so long!"

And away went Al Andrews, following the direction of the crowd of gayly-dressed people who, for the last half hour, had been hurrying toward the big tents pitched on Chadwick's ten-acre lot at the other end of town.

It was rather hard on Dan Lewis, that was a fact.

To be stuck in Mr. Maybrick's store night and day was a little more than a smart boy of nineteen was likely to stand for any length of time.

The conversation detailed above gives a general idea of the relation Dan Lewis bore to Mr. Maybrick.

We need only add that the boy was an orphan, the son of a sea captain who had died before his earliest recollection.

Further than this Dan knew little of his own history, except that his mother died when he was but a few months old.

Mr. Maybrick always gave Dan to understand that he had taken charge of him purely through charity, but now and then a rumor reached the boy's ears that such was not the case—that his father had left property, etc.

But Dan had always believed this to be mere idle talk growing out of the fact that everybody in Belleford hated Mr. Maybrick on account of his meanness.

Hence he never gave it a second thought.



That night Dan closed the store and turned into his rough bunk behind the flour barrels at the usual time.

Not one boy in a dozen but would have gone to the circus whether or no. But Dan was too honorable for that.

It was the month of May, and the night was a warm one.

Through the side window which Dan left slightly open at the top, the music of Barnum's splendid brass band came stealing into the store.

As Dan lay there listening, he could hear the shrill voices of ringmaster and clown, intermingled now and then with the growling of the wild animals in the menagerie tent, and once the lion gave a roar which almost made the store tremble.

Then the audience would applaud and the merry laughter of the children ring out upon the still night air.

All of which was very aggravating to Dan, but he put it out of his mind bravely and at last he fell asleep.

A fearful clap of thunder somewhere along toward morning woke Dan up.

Dan started up in his bunk with every nerve tingling.

In a moment he had collected himself and realized what had happened.

But what was this?

A storm was raging outside.

Was the store on fire?

A light shone at the other end.

Honestly believing that the building had been struck by lightning, Dan tumbled out of the bunk in a hurry.

Judge of his astonishment upon looking around the corner of the pile of flour barrels to see a man holding a lighted lamp, bending over the open safe.

"Burglars, by gracious!" thought Dan.

But he was not so much surprised as he was excited.

For there had been several burglaries in Belleford of late, and Mr. Maybrick worried greatly for fear they would visit his store.

Dan pulled on his clothes noiselessly.

He had formed a plan of his own for handling the burglars in case they came.

Now in all Belleford there was no more muscular fellow than Dan Lewis, as Al Andrews remarked in his conversation before the store closed.

In fact, Dan's strength was phenomenal.

He was a wonder to all who knew him, yet so modest was the boy about it that he had never given it very much thought.

"If a burglar ever tackles our store I'll pick him up bodily and pitch him out the window," Dan had laughingly remarked, when the matter was discussed.

Now that the time had come he proposed to try it, for the thought had been brought to his mind by seeing the window beside the safe wide open.

One thing Dan never thought of.

The safe door was simply swung back.

It had been opened on the combination and not forced.

The burglar, a big, powerful fellow, was stooping before it pulling over Mr. Maybrick's private papers.

His back was turned to the boy, who came creeping up behind him as noiselessly as a cat.

Never dreaming of danger, what must have been the burglar's surprise to find himself suddenly seized around the waist and lifted high in the air.

For Dan this was mere child's play.

To the burglar it was a most startling experience.

The light was upset and extinguished.

He gave one wild yell of terror as Dan, with scarcely an effort, flung him through the open window with as much ease as an ordinary man would handle a sack of meal.

The instant he had done this Dan began to think that he was a fool not to have held on to the fellow.

What had he stolen?

There was not much money in the safe, it was true, but if even one cent was missing Mr. Maybrick would be sure to make a fearful fuss.

"By thunder! I mustn't let him go so!" muttered the boy. "I'll get the deuce if I do!"

He started for the window, but before he could reach it there came a thunderous rapping upon the door.

"Open the door here! Open the door, Dan Lewis!" Mr. Maybrick's voice was heard shouting. "Open the door, I say!"

Dan flew to obey the summons as any other boy would have done.

There stood not only Mr. Maybrick, but Captain Shears, the constable, and another man.

"There! What did I tell you! There's the burglar?" cried Maybrick, pointing to the open safe. "You wouldn't believe me—now you know."

"Mr. Maybrick! What do you mean? I just threw the burglar out of the window!" gasped Dan.

"Hear him lie! Hear him lie!" shouted the store-keeper. "Arrest that fellow, constable. Do your duty! He's not satisfied with robbing other people, he must rob me—me, me who has fed and clothed him all his life!"

"It's false!" shouted Dan. "Captain Shears, I appeal to you—let me explain."

"Shut up, you young thief!" snapped the constable, who was a man of bad temper, and almost as mean as Mr. Maybrick.

And he struck Dan a stinging blow across the face.

Foolish move!

Dan's temper was as hot and fiery as the captain's was vicious and spiteful.

In an instant he lost all control of himself.

With one hand he seized the constable by the collar, lifted him off his feet, and flung him to the floor.

With the other hand, and at the same time, he caught the constable's companion and literally threw him out of the store and down the steps, where he lay as senseless in the road as Captain Shears did upon the floor.

"Murder! Murder!" roared Mr. Maybrick, and he dashed away, leaving Dan boiling with rage, but master of the field.

"Murder! Murder! Thieves! Robbers!" yelled the store-keeper, as he went rushing on up the street.

## CHAPTER II.

### HOW DAN SAVED BARNUM'S LIFE.

"Hands off! Don't you dare touch me, sir!"

"Ha, ha! You little beauty! Coy! Shy! Oh, yes, but we'll soon cure you of that!"

"Begone, sir! Touch me at your peril, and I'll complain to Mr. Barnum himself!"

"Nonsense! This is absurd! Do you think I would raise a finger to harm a little beauty like you?"

"Let me pass, sir. You insult me."

"You must pay toll first. One kiss and——"

But the big bully never finished his sentence.

For suddenly he was seized around the waist and flung high in the air, lifted up bodily with one hand, twirled around and sent flying over a low fence into the yard of an adjoining tannery, where he tumbled headlong into an open vat filled with water and a lot of dirty hides.

As coolly as though nothing had occurred, the young man



who had interfered bowed to the girl, and would have passed on.

But it was not to be.

"I thank you, sir. I thank you a thousand times," the girl exclaimed.

"It's nothing, miss."

"It's everything to me, sir. The miserable coward! I suppose you know I belong to Barnum's circus? Oh, I'll have my revenge! I'll report him to Mr. Barnum if I die for it! Strong man, indeed! Ha, ha! It did me good to see the way you handled him. He might just as well have been a child!"

The young man blushed.

"If you belong to the circus, perhaps you can help me," he said, as they walked along toward the big tents of Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth, now pitched on the outskirts of the city of H—

"I will if I can. I am Mademoiselle Astra, the bareback rider."

"Indeed! I have seen your name on the bills."

"I daresay; and that insulting scoundrel is Senor Mybrico, the strong man. Strong man, indeed! Pooh! You can double discount him. Oh, you needn't look back to see if he's coming. He hasn't got sand enough to tackle you in a fair fight."

"I'm not afraid of him."

"I'll bet you ain't! But say, what can I do for you?"

"I want a place in the show. I was on my way to apply to the manager; you can tell me how to get at him if you will be so good."

"Oh, it's old McTavish, the business manager, you want to see."

"Is he up at the tent now."

"Certainly he is, but I'm afraid you won't be able to do anything with him."

"Why not?"

"Oh, all our people is engaged at the beginning of the season. I'd help you if I could, but he don't like me."

"I'm ever so much obliged, but I expect to work my own way."

"And you'll do it, too, if I know anything. But here we are. Just follow me right in. They are rehearsing, and you'll find McTavish in the ring hanging on to Mr. Barnum's heels, as he always is."

"Barnum is here, then?"

"Yes; he came up from Bridgeport this morning. He lives there, you know. Now then, there's McTavish. Tackle him, but I'd like to bet it won't do any good."

It was doubtful encouragement this.

But the young man, nothing daunted, walked across the big ring in which the-rehearsal of a processional march representing an ancient Roman Triumph was then going on before the empty benches.

It did not look much as it did at night with all the glitter and glare.

Some of the performers were in costume, others in their everyday clothes.

There was an unusually magnificent display of horses, some harnessed to chariots, others ridden by warriors with ancient armor and warriors without.

There was as many as a dozen camels also, and one chariot drawn by zebras, those beautiful but almost untamable animals.

At night lions and tigers joined in the procession, but this was deemed unnecessary now, although there were two large elephants among the rest, who were being trained to a certain part.

In the middle of the ring stood the great Barnum himself

—for these events took place a few years previous to the showman's death—talking to a sour-faced Scotchman, who seemed to be explaining something in a very emphatic way.

As the young man approached he heard Barnum say:

"No, I'm not satisfied with him. I want a man who will come somewhere near the great Sandow, who is now attracting so much attention in Europe. Here, Mac, see what this young man wants."

Mr. McTavish turned half angrily upon Mademoiselle Astra's rescuer, who had walked boldly up to him and now stood waiting for a chance to speak.

"Well, what is it?" he demanded testily.

"I called to see if I could get an engagement with this show, sir," was the modest reply.

"No. Don't want anybody. Who the deuce let you in here?"

"I came in, sir."

"Well, you had no right. Get out."

"Wait a moment, Mac," said the great showman, pleasantly. "Don't be so rough. Boy, you should have applied at the office, but probably you didn't know. What can you do?"

"I'm said to be pretty strong, Mr. Barnum. I thought——"

"Strong! With your build! Nonsense!"

"Oh, but I am, sir."

"What's your name?"

"Dan Lewis."

"Dan Lewis?"

"Yes, sir."

"I once knew a man named Dan Lewis. Can you be his son?"

"I hardly think so, sir. My father has been dead many years."

"Well, well! Where do you live?"

"I've been living in Belleford, sir. I don't live anywhere in particular now."

And Dan might have added that he had left Belleford never to return.

His attack on Captain Shears and the affair at the store had brought Dan into serious trouble.

A warrant was out for his arrest for burglary and assault. Wisely, or otherwise, Dan secretly left Belleford that night and had followed Barnum's show to H—.

For it had long been in the boy's mind to exhibit his wonderful strength in public.

Sick and disgusted with the life he was leading, he took advantage of the occurrence we have just narrated to make the final break.

"It's pairfaictly ridiculous," sneered McTavish. "A slim-built mon like him to take the place of a mon like Senor Mybrico."

"Mybrico is a humbug," laughed Barnum. "But as you say, Mac, this boy won't do."

"You might give me a trial," suggested Dan.

"Ridiculous! Pairfaictly ridiculous! Are we to give a trial to every tramp that comes along?"

"I'm no tramp, sir!" cried Dan, hotly. "I'll have you understand——"

"Stop!" interposed Barnum. "Mac, you oughtn't to insult people the way you do."

"But, Mr. Barnum——"

"There, there! Say no more. If the boy wants a trial he shall have a trial."

"Of course you are the boss, Mr. Barnum. I don't want to interfere. Come here day after to-morrow, boy, and——"

"Day after never!" interposed Barnum. "Mac, you mean to cut me off if you can, and I tell you at I won't have it. The boy wants a trial, and he shall have it now."



"Oh, vera weel! Your will is law, sir," growled the discomfited Scotchman.

"Of course it is. As soon as they are through with the march this boy shall show us what he can do."

Dan was all in a flutter.

Now that he had gained his point, he hardly knew how to restrain himself.

But there was one great objection in his mind to an immediate exhibition of his powers.

Could he do his best dressed as he was?

Hardly.

He hinted as much to Barnum, and suggested that perhaps, after all, it would be better for him to come later in the day.

"No, no! Now!" said the showman. "There's no time like the present. I say now. Mac, take the boy to the property man and have him rigged out in proper shape."

Now there was no getting out of any such positive order as this.

The crusty McTavish saw that the matter had gone beyond the possibility of protest.

Bidding Dan follow him, he led the way to the property room and told the property man what Mr. Barnum had said.

In less than fifteen minutes Dan was back in the presence of the great showman again, dressed appropriately for the business in which he was about to engage.

He wore a skin-tight shirt of a delicate pink, and his legs were covered with flesh-colored tights, all of which showed his muscular form to its fullest advantage, while around his waist were red velvet trunks covered with spangles which flashed and glittered as he walked across the ring.

"Come, that's more like it," exclaimed Barnum, as he approached. "Now then, boy, just wait till this procession makes one more round and we shall see what you can do."

"Which won't be much, I'll bet a dollar," growled McTavish beneath his breath.

"Keep cool, Mac. Don't cry the boy down," laughed Barnum.

"Which I'm not doing, sir. I'm nothing if not fair, but I don't like——"

"Look out! Look out!"

Suddenly a wild cry went up behind them.

Then there was a rush and a thunderous pounding upon the ground.

"Mersey! It's Tib, the mad elephant, in one of his tantrums!" cried McTavish, making a rush for the side of the ring.

For there, heading directly for them, was one of the largest elephants in the show.

It was an animal who, by his violent outbreaks, had given much trouble to his keepers.

Trumpeting loudly, with his trunk performing the wildest gyrations, the huge animal rushed toward them, followed by three keepers brandishing their iron-pointed goads.

"Look out, Mr. Barnum! Look out, sir!" they shouted.

The old showman started, but by some strange mishap lost his footing and fell.

In an instant Tib was upon him with lowered head.

A second more and Barnum's life would have been crushed out.

Nothing could have saved him but that which now occurred.

Dan, seeing his danger, made one quick rush for the elephant.

Seizing him by both stumps of tusks, he checked the bulky brute for an instant.

But that instant was enough.

It gave the great showman the chance to regain his feet

The next poor Dan knew the elephant's trunk was lashing him furiously.

He could keep his hold no longer.

Down he fell, but as he went he gave the tusks one mighty twist.

A cry of amazement rang out through the tent.

For as Dan went down the elephant went with him.

Then came darkness—oblivion!

Brave Dan!

He had thrown the elephant.

He had saved the life of the world's own Barnum.

But how fared it with the boy himself?

Was Dan alive or dead?

### CHAPTER III.

#### TREACHERY.

"Boy, I'm everlastingly indebted to you."

"Not at all, sir. It is nothing."

"Nothing! You have saved my life! I'm an old man, it is true, but I don't care to die just yet."

"Oh, I don't think there was any real danger, sir."

"Yes, there was. I should have been trampled to death in another moment if you hadn't thrown Tib as you did."

Dan listened to Barnum's emphatic words with wildly beating heart.

Was the dream of his life about to be realized?

Was he at last to have the opportunity to exhibit his wonderful gift in public?

Not yet, it seemed, although Dan thought so then.

"I should like to go on with this trial and engage you at once," continued Barnum, "for I am satisfied that with a little practice you could throw the performances of my strong man, Senor Mybrico, entirely in the shade; but this affair has shaken me up terribly, and I don't feel equal to giving you the attention I want to give you just now."

Dan's heart sank.

Was it all over?

Was his chance gone?

But Barnum's next words relieved him somewhat.

"You see," said the showman, "I am under a contract with Mybrico, and I don't like to break it unless I can positively better myself."

"You know best, sir. I'm sure I could give you satisfaction, though."

"Your strength is certainly most remarkable; but I must be fair, boy. I must be fair."

"I shouldn't want you to be otherwise, Mr. Barnum."

"Certainly not. I was about to add that to-night will decide it. I have fully determined what to do."

"Yes, sir."

"It is this. When I engaged Mybrico, it was with the understanding that he could and would perform Sandow's famous act of lifting a platform with six people upon it. This he as yet has not done."

"Can't he do it, sir?"

"I don't know whether he can or not. He has always dodged the issue. He claims that he can, but with one excuse or another has put it off. Now he has either got to do it or fail."

Dan smiled.

"Do you think you can do it?" asked Barnum, turning upon him suddenly.

"I can't raise it off the ground, sir."

"I don't expect that, but can you hold it on your shoulders



"I wouldn't want to say, but I'd like to try."

"And you shall. Be here to-morrow at nine o'clock. Meanwhile take this as a slight return for the services you have performed for me."

And Barnum took from his pocketbook a one-hundred-dollar bill which he handed over to Dan.

The boy blushed and drew back.

"I cannot take that, Mr. Barnum," he stammered.

"Oh, but you must. I insist."

"I can't! I won't! But I'll show you what I can do in the way of lifting."

And without another word Dan turned and hurried from the great showman's presence in spite of his calls to come back.

He went straight to the property room and changed his clothes.

Not until Dan was out of the big tent and in the open air did he breathe freely.

"I can knock that fellow out every time, and I'll do it, too!" he murmured, as he struck across lots to the nearest street.

So full were his thoughts of his wonderful luck in so strongly attracting the attention of the great showman to himself that he could think of nothing else, and never once looked behind him.

Had he done so he would have seen two men standing alongside the big tent looking at him as he hurried away.

"That's the fellow, Bud," whispered one to the other. "Of course it won't do for me to have a hand in it, but if you can fix it so that he will never show up here again I'll see that——"

But the conversation was suddenly broken off by the appearance of Mr. Barnum, who, accompanied by Mr. McTavish, now emerged from the tent.

"You can say what you like, Mac, but I believe he can do it," remarked the great showman, as they walked away.

Who was Barnum speaking of?

Was it Dan?

That night Dan took in the show.

He would have gone in the afternoon, too, but he only had a trifle of money and he felt that he could not afford to go twice.

His idea was to go in the upper tier of seats, but when he reached the ticket-office it suddenly occurred to him that, even if it did cost a little more, it would be better to take a front seat so that he could study Senor Mybrico's act and be better prepared for his ordeal next day.

He had to wait a good hour before the strong man appeared in the ring.

Dan was completely carried away with all that passed before his wondering eyes meanwhile.

Not but what he had seen circuses before.

He had seen at least half a dozen, but never anything approaching this.

The triumphal procession came first and was a tremendous success.

Dan was lost in wonder at the gorgeous costumes, the gilded chariots, and of the glittering arms of the performers as they went sweeping past.

The elephant Tib was in his usual place and trudged along wholly oblivious to the presence of the conqueror.

But the animal which most attracted Dan's notice was a magnificent royal Bengal tiger which moved around the ring in a gilded cage drawn by four milk white horses.

Following the procession were the usual acts of the show.

Darling bareback riding, trick mules, funny clowns, and all that sort of thing.

At last Mademoiselle Astra made her appearance, and was greeted with tumultuous applause.

And her riding seemed to Dan perfectly wonderful, especially when she made the blazing hoops, leaping from her Arabian steed, Selim, an act which brought her more applause and a shower of bouquets.

Again and again she was encored.

And it was on the last encore that Dan perceived that the eyes of the popular equestrienne were fixed upon him.

As she went flying around the ring she suddenly drew a small bouquet from her belt and flung it right over the rail at Dan.

Everybody laughed, and Dan found himself blushing like a peony as he picked up the bouquet.

Tucked away among the flowers he saw a folded scrap of paper which made him blush all the more.

It was a delicate matter to detach this note and read it without attracting the attention of his neighbors, but Dan managed to do it.

But it was no love missive, as the audience doubtless supposed.

On the contrary, the note was exceedingly brief and rather startling.

"Look out for Mybrico. He has sworn to do you up. Be on your guard.

Your friend,

"ASTRA."

Such was the note, and it need scarcely be said that it did not surprise Dan.

Nor did it disturb him a bit.

"Pooh! Let him try it. I'm good for him every time," he thought. "But it was very kind of that girl to warn me, all the same."

He had scarcely finished reading the note when the band started up and out bounced Senor Mybrico himself and began to do his act.

The bully, in his tights and spangles, looked none the worse for his ducking in the tannery vat.

If he saw Dan he did not betray it by any change of countenance, but went right to work tossing up heavy cannonballs and catching them on his chest and shoulders as they came down.

Then he lifted a small cannon high above his head and twirled it about in one hand.

The lifting of the clown followed.

He first put him against his hip, then upon his shoulder, then allowing him to walk out upon his right arm, holding him up as he stood upon his hand.

It was well done. Dan was not sure that he could do it, but right in the midst of the applause Mybrico suddenly let his arm drop and down came the unfortunate clown with a rush that sent him sprawling.

Whether this was done purposely or not Dan could not make out.

But the audience evidently thought it was, and there was more applause.

Taken altogether, Mybrico's performance was a success, and this had a decidedly depressing effect on Dan.

"I never can carry myself off as he does; there's no use to think of it," thought the boy.

And he was quite blue when the chariot race, the next act, began.

The race was scarcely over when one of the ushers, pushing his way down in front, slipped a note into Dan's hand.

Thinking it was another missive from Mademoiselle Astra, he hastily opened it, and was surprised enough to see what it really contained.

"I would like to see you at once. Follow the bearer.

"P. T. BARNUM"



Such was the reading of this second note.

Dan was on his feet in an instant.

His heart beat wildly.

Had the great showman changed his mind?

Had he determined that, after all, it would be of no use to give him a trial?

Such was Dan's thought as he hurried after the usher, who in spite of his correct dress was an ugly-looking fellow with wicked eyes, which seemed to glitter with a snaky light as he conducted Dan through a side entrance into the concealed portion of the tent.

Dan now found himself in a narrow passage lined with canvas on either side, and lighted with a single lantern which hung suspended from a bar above.

Without a word the usher hurried on to the end of the passage, there pushing aside a flap of canvas which, when it fell, left them quite in the dark.

"Hello! Why in thunder haven't they got a light here?" he growled.

"It is rather dark," said Dan, "but I suppose we haven't far to go."

"Only a step. Do you mind?"

"Certainly not."

"All right. There should be a lantern here, but there ain't. Keep close to me."

Dan obeyed, for indeed, it could not well have been darker.

"Wait here a second," said the usher, suddenly pausing. He then pushed on and disappeared.

In a moment he was at Dan's side again, although the boy could scarcely see him.

"Go on; you'll find Barnum in there," he whispered, hoarsely, at the same time giving Dan a slight push which sent him through another of the loose canvas doors.

It was as dark here as it had been behind, and Dan groped his way forward a few steps.

Slam—bang!

Suddenly a door shut behind him and a key was heard to snap in a lock.

Dan stopped short.

Now for the first time a suspicion of treachery entered his mind.

At the same instant it was confirmed in the most startling manner.

A low, angry growl greeted Dan's ears.

Right ahead of him, shining through the darkness, he beheld to his horror two gleaming eyes.

Dan's hair seemed to fairly rise in horror.

Perspiration broke from every pore.

Instinctively he knew his danger, and stood as though paralyzed.

Then came a fierce, angry growl, a sudden rush, and through the darkness a huge form made one wild spring toward poor Dan.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### DAN'S GREAT TRIUMPH.

A low, fierce growl.

A wild lashing of the tail against the iron bars.

Then all at once a spring.

This was what Dan Lewis heard as he stood staring into the darkness, seeing only those gleaming eyes.

Dan realized what had happened.

He was in the cage of some fierce wild beast.

How he came to be there was something that he never

His whole soul was concentrated on the one thought of self-preservation.

He watched for the spring, and stepped nimbly aside when it came.

Thud!

The unseen beast struck against the walls of the cage with a sickening sound.

The cage rocked like a ship in a storm.

Now a deep, angry growling was heard in the darkness.

Quick as lightning the beast turned and made for Dan again.

This time the boy was ready for him.

The eyes were his guide.

He flung himself forward and caught the beast by the throat.

He forced it to an upright position.

He pressed it back against the bars of the cage.

"Help!"

"Help!"

"Help!"

Now was the time to make his situation known, and Dan raised his voice in one wild cry.

It was heard all over the circus tent.

In a moment lights came flashing in upon Dan.

White, frightened faces were peering at him through the bars of the cage.

"Holy murder! It's that infernal strong boy!" cried McTavish, who had appeared with the rest. "How the deuce did he get there?"

But others had their say also.

"It's the tigress!"

"It's Sue, the tigress!"

"Look! Look! He's got her by the throat! He's holding her!"

These and other cries of astonishment rang out.

But no one made a move to help poor Dan.

No one dared.

Sue, the tigress, was one of the fiercest beasts in the show.

Only one man was able to manage her.

This was Budd West, the trainer.

So the cry went up:

"Budd!"

"Budd!"

"Budd!"

And all this time Dan held the tigress while waiting for the trainer to come.

The strain was dreadful.

The big cat struggled wildly, growled, snapped and spit, but all in vain.

Then in the midst of the excitement a man came running into the small enclosure where the tiger's cage stood.

Elbowing his way among the crowd of performers, stablemen, cagemen and others, he made one dash for the door and flung it open.

In his hand was a short whip.

His eyes were fixed upon the tigress.

"Drop her—drop her, boy!" he shouted. "Drop her and leave her to me!"

Dan let go his hold and sprang through the door.

The tiger fell back against the bars limp and half dead.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Cruelly Budd West lashed the beast.

It was scarcely necessary.

Sue, the tigress, was about used up.

Now the excitement around the cage rather increased than diminished.



Everybody had something to say, and everybody said it at once.

"What the blazes do you mean by this?"

"What took you in there, boy?"

"Speak! By heaven, you shall sweat for this!"

"You've most killed the most valuable tiger in the show."

It was McTavish roaring at Dan.

"Hold on a minute till I get my wind, will you?" gasped Dan.

But he spoke with perfect calmness.

"Do you suppose I went into that cage and locked myself in?" he demanded, after his breath came. "I tell you it's a trick that's been played on me—a mean, dirty trick! I shall report it to Mr. Barnum to-morrow, see if I don't."

This caused Manager McTavish to haul in his horns.

More especially as Budd West, now coming out of the cage, sided with the boy.

"Of course it's a trick, Mac, and we want to find out who did it," he said. "That door was locked and the boy couldn't have unlocked it if he'd tried."

This increased the excitement, for it made a mystery of the matter.

Dan was called upon for an explanation, and explained.

"This must be looked into," growled McTavish, "but you better not say anything about it to Mr. Barnum. It will only make trouble for me if you do."

There was a sort of an appeal in this.

Dan yielded.

Budd West made matters easier by flattering him on his wonderful strength.

"There's not a man in this show who could do what you did," he declared. "Mybrico couldn't have begun to do it. Blame me if I don't think you are the strongest boy in the world."

And yet, when Dan tumbled into bed that night and began to think, he was certain that he had seen Budd West before.

Suddenly he remembered.

It was West who had been talking with Mybrico when he left the tent in the morning.

This was all very well, but who was the man that had decoyed Dan into the tiger's cage?

Dan described him to McTavish. McTavish declared there was no such man in the show.

There the matter had to rest for that night.

But Dan thought of Mademoiselle Astra's warning note.

"If I can get a chance to talk with her she'll tell me," he reflected, as he dropped off to sleep.

Next morning Dan was up bright and early.

Promptly at nine o'clock he presented himself at the big tent.

Barnum had not yet arrived, but Manager McTavish was on hand.

He was very polite to Dan.

"Don't say a word about it, boy," he whispered. "It'll only make a row and do no good to anybody. Just hold your tongue and I'll find out who the villain is that played the dirty trick on you."

Only too glad to have a chance to get on the right side of the crusty manager, Dan agreed to this.

At half-past nine Barnum arrived.

He went for Dan and put a few questions about his family.

As he made no comment upon the answers returned, Dan could form no idea as to what was in the great showman's mind.

At ten the rehearsal was called.

There were some new equestrian acts to be gone through with first.

A new bareback rider was to be engaged.

There were three candidates, and Barnum announced that he would examine into their merits first.

Meanwhile Dan was sent to the property room to dress in the costume he had worn on the previous day.

He was soon clad in tights and spangles again.

Returning to the ring, he found that Senor Mybrico was there among the rest.

He also was in costume.

He scowled at Dan, but did not speak.

McTavish was there, of course, and also several members of the company.

After the riding contest had been decided, Barnum spoke.

"Senor Mybrico," he said, "I need scarcely tell you that your recent performances have not fully satisfied me. It was part of your agreement to lift a platform with six men upon it."

"Well, I can do it," replied the strong man, scowling at Dan again.

"Very well. I shall now give you an opportunity to prove your claim, but first I want to introduce to you a young friend of mine."

Thus saying, Barnum took Dan by the arm and led him forward.

"Senor Mybrico, this is Dan Lewis," he said. "You two should know each other and be friends."

Mybrico scowled worse than ever.

But Dan magnanimously held out his hand.

The strong man could not refuse it.

He shook hands gingerly.

"There, that's as it should be," said Barnum, in his cheerful way. "Now then, boy, we'll see what you can do with weights."

Several weights were produced.

One was for 200 pounds, another 300, another 500.

At the last Dan looked rather dubiously.

But there was no chance to back out now.

"Fire away!" cried Barnum. "Let's see what you are made of."

Dan seized the 200-pound weight and tossed it about as though it had been a feather.

Then came the 300-pounder.

This did not go up so easy, but Dan did not let anyone know it.

He held it over his head and swung it about; he held it out at arm's length, first in his left hand and then in his right, Mybrico looking on all the while with a covert sneer.

Dropping this weight, Dan seized the 500-pounder.

Slowly it rose.

It was an effort, of course, but Dan managed it.

He put the weight at arm's length above his head.

"Good! Good!" cried Barnum.

And all applauded.

All but Mybrico.

He remained silent and glum.

"Now then, Mybrico, is your chance," said the great showman.

"Bring in the platform!" he called out.

The supes hustled about and brought a big wooden platform about ten feet square.

This they set upon two mason's horses.

"Get on, Mac!" cried Barnum.

He climbed up himself and McTavish followed.

Four others joined them.

There were six good-sized men.

Barnum looked them over and announced that the total weight was not less than 1,200 pounds.



"Fire away, Mybrico!" he exclaimed. "If you can lift us, lift us! No nonsense now! It's got to be done!"

Senor Mybrico, thus urged, put himself under the platform, bringing his shoulders to bear against it.

But the platform did not rise.

Yet it was evident that the strong man was exerting all his strength.

He strained and sought to move it.

Perspiration burst from his forehead.

But all to no purpose.

The platform never budged.

Barnum said nothing.

The excitement was intense.

No one ventured to speak.

Dan grew fearfully nervous watching.

If Senor Mybrico could not do this, what right had he to hope?

But the time for the test had come.

"There, there, Mybrico! It's no use. You can't do it!" cried Barnum, suddenly. "Get out from under there and give it up."

"I'm not in good condition to-day. You will give me another trial, of course?" murmured Mybrico, as he retreated.

But Barnum never answered him.

"Your turn, my young Sandow," he exclaimed, pointing his finger at Dan.

It was now or never!

Dan stooped under the platform and braced his shoulders against it.

It moved!

Up it went!

The platform, with Mr. Barnum and the five men upon it, rose clean off the horses a good six inches, resting upon Dan's shoulders as cheer after cheer rang out through the big tent.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MYSTERIOUS SHOT.

"All right, my boy. That settles it. You are engaged."

Thus spoke the great Barnum.

The words were of the highest importance to Dan Lewis.

They changed the whole tenor of his life.

That night Senor Mybrico was paid off and discharged.

Where he went to Dan did not know and did not care.

He took the strong man's place in the ring when the show opened at Poughkeepsie, N. Y., the next place for which they were billed.

As for Dan, Barnum billed him as the "Young Sandow, the Strongest Boy in the World."

From the very first Dan "caught on" with the public, to use Mr. McTavish's favorite phrase.

They seemed to take to him wonderfully.

The platform-lifting act grew popular from the start.

This and many other exhibitions of his wonderful strength Dan gave nightly and at the afternoon matinee.

At Poughkeepsie Barnum left the show and returned to New York.

The next stop was Hudson.

The next was Albany.

It was here that a startling occurrence took place.

It came near bringing Dan's career to an abrupt close.

"Say, young Lewis, you'll have to double up to-night," said Mr. McTavish early on the second evening of the performance of the "Greatest Show on Earth" in Albany.

"All right, sir," replied Dan, in his usual good-natured way as the manager looked into the green room with this announcement.

"Well, by heavens, you're the obliging one!" said the manager. "You never even ask me what or why."

"Why should I, sir? I'm only too glad to do anything to help the show along."

"Oh, professional dignity and all that sort of thing."

"I don't know anything about that, Mr. McTavish. I always want to be obliging."

"Hoot, mon, but ye'll get on ye high horse in time like all others," said the Scotchman, dropping into his native dialect.

"Perhaps I will in time, sir, but I ain't there now. What's wanted?"

"Why, Skinny-stick-in-the-mud says he's sick and can't lift the ladder, but he can do all the rest of his act if he can only have help in that."

Now, by Skinny-stick-in-the-mud, Mr. McTavish meant Simoushaki, the Japanese juggler, who was one of the best drawing-cards billed for the evening's performance.

Dan had already become acquainted with the man, and liked him immensely.

Therefore he was only too willing to comply.

Moreover, M'lle Astra liked Simoushaki.

Anyone M'lle Astra liked Dan liked.

For the fair equestrienne and Barnum's young Sandow had grown to be the best friends in the world.

That night the tent was more than usually crowded.

The first numbers of the bill were well received.

The triumphal procession was better than ever.

The bareback riding was amazing in its boldness.

M'lle Astra was cheered to the echo.

When she went through the blazing hoop the audience seemed to grow fairly wild and called her out again and again.

"You are doing fine to-night," whispered Dan, as he passed her on his way to the ring.

"Am I? Look out you do as well."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing; only I had a presentiment."

"Ah! Another of your presentiments! Then I must look out."

For this explanation was the only one M'lle Astra had been able to give for writing the warning letter to Dan on the evening of the affair of the tiger's cage.

Dan had been in hopes she could give him some clew to the villain who had personated an usher and led him so near his death.

But not a bit of it.

All Astra could say was that she had a presentiment.

And for this reason Dan was all the more ready to heed her now.

Indeed he felt a little worried as he entered the ring to do his own act.

But he soon forgot all about the matter.

The usual performance was gone through with.

Dan lifted his weights.

He did Mybrico's cannonball act, only a great deal better.

Then he lifted two of the supes by belt put about their waists, one in each hand, and held them out at arm's length.

This brought down the house.

But the applause was still greater when Dan lifted the platform.

Not with six men only.

There were eight on it this time.

Dan had promised Barnum that he would make it ten within a month.



After Dan had been three times encored, Simoushaki, the Jap, came into the ring.

No one would have guessed that the man was sick to have seen him bow and smile.

Simoushaki's tricks were truly wonderful, and he performed them to perfection.

His last act was rather an old one.

A man is sent up a ladder held upon the juggler's shoulders.

The ladder suddenly closes and the man stands balanced upon the top of what is actually nothing but a single stick.

Usually this is done with a boy.

But Simoushaki, who prided himself upon his strength, always performed it with another Jap, a man weighing a good two hundred pounds.

Dan rushed to the green room and changed his costume for a supe's dress.

He was back in the ring in a moment, and stood watching the juggler's tricks.

"Dat ees all right, boy," whispered Simoushaki. "I vas seek, but now I vas all petter. I shall not you vant."

"Good! I'm glad you're better," replied Dan, "but I may as well stay here in case your strength gives out."

The Jap did not reply.

He had the top-spinning act on the umbrella to do, and he went about it in a most skillful manner, which excited the admiration of all the small boys in the house.

Next came the ladder act.

The Jap held the ladder in both hands and, as the man began to ascend, shifted the weight to his shoulders.

He staggered a little, for he was truly very much weakened from a severe attack of indigestion the night before.

Dan watched him dubiously.

"Will he be able to hold it?" he wondered.

But his fears were groundless.

Simoushaki seemed to gather strength as he went on.

The ladder closed.

Balancing himself upon the pole thus formed, the burly Jap began to swing round and round, the pole resting between Simoushaki's shoulder blades.

At the same instant the sharp crack of a pistol rang out through the tent.

What had happened?

The audience took it for a part of the performance at first.

They never realized that a tragedy had been enacted until they saw Simoushaki drop face downward upon the ground.

A general murmur of horror filled the tent.

But it changed into a tumult of applause in a second of time.

For Dan, with one sudden dart forward, seized the pole before it could strike the ground, and with one hand raised it aloft, while the fat Jap on top went on with his whirling oblivious to what had occurred.

## CHAPTER VI.

NO. 9 BRIGGS STREET.

"Who fired that shot?"

This was the question in everybody's mouth behind the scenes.

Not so with the audience.

After the triumphant finish to the tragedy they never imagined how serious it was.

Fortunately for the juggler the ball had only gone through the right forearm instead of his heart.

He was able to get up, bow and back away.

But there was a tremendous excitement among the professional behind the scenes.

McTavish was raging.

So was the juggler, as a matter of course.

The manager swore that he would know the truth if it took every detective in the State of New York to ferret it out.

Everybody congratulated Dan upon his wonderful strength and his bravery.

The matter was in everybody's mouth when, after the big tent was empty, the circus people separated for the night and went their several ways.

"It was nothing," Dan declared to M'lle Astra, as he started to escort her to a small hotel not far from the river, where the girl was staying.

"Nothing for you, Dan, but who else could have done it?"

"Pshaw! I can't believe but what there are a dozen men in the company who could."

"I know differently. But look here, Dan!"

"What is it, Miss Brown?"

For plain Louise Brown was the name M'lle Astra bore when out of the ring.

"What do you think of my presentiment now, Dan?"

"It came true, as the other one did."

"Then you think I am something of a prophet?"

"I can't deny it."

"Dan, I'll tell you something else."

"Well, what?"

"I saw the man who fired the shot."

"You did?"

"I did. He sat in the top row about the middle."

"What kind of a looking fellow was he?"

"Dark, a heavy beard. I could not say whether he was tall or short, because he was sitting down; but one thing I'm pretty certain of, he was disguised."

"Who could it have been?"

"I have my suspicions, Dan."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean just this. That shot was never fired at Simoushaki."

"Ah!"

"It was fired at you, Dan. Mark my words, and it would be well for you to be on your guard."

This gave Dan plenty of food for thought.

M'lle Astra would say no more.

Of course Dan asked her if she thought the man was Mybrico.

"I don't know. He did not look like Mybrico and I don't want to accuse anyone wrongfully," was the only reply the girl would make.

Dan was still thinking about the matter when he turned into bed that night.

Now the hotel where Miss Brown and the other ladies connected with the show were staying was not large enough to accommodate the male members of the company.

Dan and several others had rooms at another hotel further down the same street.

Early in the morning Dan was awakened by a sharp knocking on his door.

He jumped out of bed in a hurry.

Upon opening the door he found a district messenger boy with a note.

Dan opened the envelope and read as follows:

"Dear Dan:

"I have something to tell you of the utmost importance. Come to me at once. I am not at the hotel. I have gone to a friend's house. The boy will show you where. Don't delay a moment.

Yours,

"LOUISE BROWN."



Now, this fitted so well with the conversation they had had the night before that Dan never hesitated an instant.

Bidding the boy wait outside, he hurried on his clothes, and without stopping for anything, followed him into the street.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"I was told to take you to No. 9 Briggs street," replied the boy.

"Far from here?"

"No, only a little way."

"Who gave you that letter?"

"I got a call from the Greenbush House. A man gave it to me there."

Now, the Greenbush House was where M'lle Astra was staying.

This, of course, made everything seem all right to Dan.

No. 9 Briggs street proved to be a shabby little dwelling close down by the river, with a pickle factory on one side and an iron foundry on the other.

It was an old house and bore a deserted look.

The blinds were all closed and the front stoop was badly broken.

Altogether, the appearance of the place should have aroused Dan's suspicions.

But he never stopped to think, and running up the steps, pulled the bell.

Meanwhile the messenger boy turned and ran away.

The bell was not answered immediately.

Dan had to ring a second time.

Then one of the blinds above him was slightly opened.

Dan could see a face peering down, and a voice called out:

"Well, what's wanted?"

"I want to see Miss Brown," answered Dan, looking up.

"Oh, all right! She's here. Walk right in; the door ain't locked."

Dan opened the door and stepped into a passage as black as midnight.

Slam went the door behind him.

"Come on up here!" called the voice.

Dan groped his way forward.

One—two—three steps were taken.

Dan put his foot forward for the fourth and stepped on nothingness.

He made one wild effort to save himself.

Useless!

His hands clutched only empty air.

Down he dropped in the darkness below, uttering as he fell one startled cry.

"Shut the trap! Shut the trap!" cried the voice.

"By heaven, we've got him hard and fast!"

Instantly a light flashed upon the gloom.

There stood a man with a dark-lantern in his hand.

He hastily closed a trap-door which nearly took up the width of the entry floor.

"That's what's the matter!" exclaimed the owner of the voice.

And a second man came hurrying down a flight of rickety stairs.

"Is it the fellow you wanted?" asked the man with the lantern.

"It is. Say nothing. Keep dark and forget that he ever entered the house. I'll pay you well for this."

Poor Dan!

Once more in the toils!

Had the career of Barnum's young Sandow been cut off forever?

It looked very much like it.

For the man who had come downstairs now drew a revolver and, seizing the lantern from the hand of his companion, hurried off into the darkness beyond the trap-door.

## CHAPTER VII.

### LEMONS.

"Look out for him, boss! He's a bad man. He's a thief! He's a murderer! He'll cut your heart out if he gets a chance!"

Now these are not very encouraging words for a man who has suddenly dropped through a secret trap and landed somewhere in the darkness—not at all!

But just these words were called out to Dan Lewis as he picked himself up.

Of course Dan was frightened.

But the fall did not hurt him any.

He landed on soft earth, and was on his feet in a moment.

"Hello, there! Who are you? Where are you?" he called in answer to the mysterious warning voice.

But if Dan's unseen adviser heard, he did not heed.

Dan listened.

Hurried footsteps were heard approaching.

Slam! Bang!

A heavy iron door had shut somewhere.

The footsteps were close upon him.

They were moving toward him.

As Dan could see nothing, the situation was terrible.

Was the bad man, the thief, the murderer, the man ready to cut his heart out, coming?

It looked very much that way.

Dan held his breath and braced himself for what was to happen.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Suddenly three pistol shots rang out through the darkness.

The boy gave a yell and flung himself on the ground.

Instantly a dark lantern flashed.

Dan, who was only playing possum, saw the bad man out of one corner of his eye.

Dressed in ordinary clothes now, Dan instantly recognized him as the burglar he had thrown out of Mr. Maybrick's store on that memorable night.

But this was not all.

He recognized him also as Senor Mybrico and wondered that he had been so blind as not to know the truth before.

Then Dan shut his eyes closer and lay perfectly still.

Mybrico came and stood over him.

He flashed the lantern down upon his face.

"By jove, I must have hit him!" he muttered. "What luck! I only fired as a flyer. Didn't expect to hit him, but I have."

He stood still and listened.

It was as silent as death in the cellar.

"This is luck! Great luck!" muttered the ex-strong man. "Now then, if I can only dispose of the body quietly I've got a dead cinch on the property and the old man will have to whack up with me whether he wants to or not."

Dan heard, but did not understand.

He thought the "old man" referred to Barnum, and "the property," the costumes and paraphernalia for the stage.



man's act, for which, Mr. McTavish had informed him, Mybrico had put in a claim.

Dan waited till Mybrico turned away.

He could hear him moving across the cellar.

"What's up now?" he thought. "Oh, if I could only capture him and turn him over to the police!"

But Mybrico knew his ground and Dan didn't.

To attempt anything rash might lead to further trouble.

"Perhaps," thought Dan, "that fellow who spoke before will speak again."

He was right.

Clang! went the iron door.

A key was heard to turn and Mybrico's footsteps retreated.

Dan was on his feet the moment the sound died away.

"Hello! Are you there?" he whispered.

"Coming, boss!" answered the warning voice.

"Who are you?"

"Only Lemons."

"Lemons! Who's Lemons?"

"Me. Say, hold your jaw, will yer? If he hears we're up the flue."

Then something came creeping through the darkness toward Dan.

In a moment a hand touched him.

"Here I be, boss!"

"Lemons! Say, can't you show me how to get out of this?"

"You bet I can!"

"You will?"

"You bet I will!"

"Do it, boy, and I'll give you a dollar—wish I could give you more, but it's every cent I've got."

"Golly! A whole dollar! Why, I never had so much money in my life!"

"Quick! Lead the way and the dollar is yours."

"But say, boss, de door is locked. Dunno whether you can open it or not."

"I can try."

"Shouldn't wonder if you can. He claims to be de strongest man in the world, an' Pete says you is stronger than him."

"If I am stronger than the strongest man in the world, I ought to be able to open the door," laughed Dan.

"He thought he shot you, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"He thought you was dead, but you wasn't. Ha, ha! You fooled him nice."

"Hush! You told me to be quiet, Lemons, and now you are talkin' yourself. Where's this door?"

"Right here."

It was so.

They were close against it now.

Dan put out his hand and felt the door.

It was solid iron.

He seized the knob and shook it, but the door would not yield.

"If we only had a light here and could see what to do," he murmured.

"Hain't got none and can't get none," replied Lemons.

"I wish I had a match."

"Hain't you got one?"

"No."

"An' I can't get one."

"Who are you anyway, Lemons?"

"Nobody."

"What sort of a place is this?"

"A bad crib. All kinds of crooks hang out here."

"So?"

"Yair. Dey's a tough lot, an' don't you forget it; I know."

"And what do you do here?"

"Anything they want me to—everything. I shines dere shoes, I waits on de table. Dey calls me dere slavey an' I specs I am."

At the same instant Mybrico's footsteps were heard returning.

"He's a-comin'! He's a-comin'!" breathed Lemons.

And off he darted into the darkness.

Dan's resolution was instantly taken.

"I won't bother with the door," he thought. "If I ain't good for Mybrico, I deserve to die."

So he stood aside and waited.

In an instant the door was opened by Mybrico.

Behind him stood the man who had closed the trap.

Dan made one rush out of the darkness and flung himself upon Mybrico.

There was a sharp cry.

The lantern fell, but landed upright and still burning upon the cellar floor.

"Help me, Pete! Help me! Blast it all, the fellow will strangle me!" panted Mybrico, as he struggled with Dan.

It was indeed a desperate fight.

The two strong men were wrestling with all their wonderful powers for the mastery.

The man Pete, who had retreated a few steps at the first alarm, now sprang forward.

Dan saw him coming.

It was the critical moment.

But Barnum's young Sandow never lost his head.

With a dextrous twist he locked his left leg between Mybrico's legs and managed to get his left arm about his neck.

This was done in a second.

On came Pete.

Dan let him get within arm's length, and then hauled off and gave him one between the eyes with his right fist.

It was a fearful blow!

Pete dropped to the floor like a log and never moved.

But all this time Mybrico was struggling.

Suddenly he twisted himself free and flung Dan to the left, almost flooring him.

But the advantage was only for a moment.

Instantly Dan recovered himself.

Biff!

Whack!

Bang!

Thud!

Most terribly did Dan pound the villain.

In a few seconds it was all over.

Mybrico, the strong man, lay stretched out beside Pete.

But Dan had enough of it, too.

All idea of turning Mybrico over to the police vanished.

Now he thought only of escape.

Catching up the lantern, he hurried through the passage and went bounding up the stairs.

Pattering footsteps followed him.

But Dan never stopped to look behind him until he had flung open the front door.

"Take me, boss—take me! I want to jine the circus! Don't leave me behind to be killed!"

"Lemons!"

It was a surprise to Dan, although he might have known it by the boy's talk.

There stood Lemons looking at him pleadingly.

But Lemons was barefooted, hatless, coatless, very dirty and very ragged.



Moreover, Lemons' face was as black as the ace of spades.

"You join Barnum's circus—you!" laughed Dan.

"I did what I could for yer, boss."

"By jove, you did, Lemons! Come! If you want to go with me so you shall!"

The way was clear now.

Followed by Lemons, Dan hurried down the stoop.

In a moment they had passed the pickle factory and turned the corner, leaving No. 9 Briggs street and its unpleasant memories far behind.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ENEMY STILL AT WORK.

"I wouldn't say a word about it if I were you, Dan."

"Why not, Miss Brown?"

"Pshaw, Dan! To the world I am Mademoiselle Astra, to my acquaintances Miss Brown, but my friends call me Louise, and——"

"And I hope I am one of your friends," interrupted Barnum's young Sandow, blushing.

"Of course you are, Dan, and that's why I undertake to advise you. I wouldn't say a word about it if I were you."

"But he tried to murder me. If I tell the police they'll arrest him."

"Yes, and you, too, like enough."

"Me?"

"Certainly."

"But I don't understand."

"That's because you know nothing about the laws of the state of New York. They'll arrest you as a witness and lock you up in the House of Detention, as sure as fate."

"Then I guess I'd beter take your advice, Louise."

"You had."

"Of course you never wrote that letter."

"Never! It was a miserable forgery, done by Mybrico or some friend of his. But say, Dan, what do you mean to do with the little moke?"

"Keep him."

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, but I must. Poor Lemons! Perhaps he didn't actually save my life, but he tried his best to do it. He says he hasn't got a friend in the world, and had rather die than go back to that house."

"You might dress him up like a monkey and make him wait on you in the ring."

"I was thinking of that. I would if I had any money."

"Haven't you?"

"Not a cent. You know I haven't been paid yet."

"McTavish would give you an advance if you asked for it."

"I ain't asking any favors from McTavish—that's one thing sure."

"Will you accept an advance from me, Dan?"

"Oh, I shouldn't like to do that."

"Why not?"

"Because——"

"Because nothing. You need it and you shall have it, and Lemons shall be your man Friday. I think it will take immensely wth the public."

And Mademoiselle Astra proved to be quite right.

Dan did take the money.

The result of his call on the equestrienne—for he had gone directly to her hotel after leaving No. 9 Briggs street—was

that Dan left with \$25 in his pocket, which of course was duly returned when payday came.

When Dan made his proposition to Lemons, the little darky acceded to it joyfully.

As Mr. McTavish took to it kindly, Lemons appeared in the ring with Dan that night dressed in a gorgeous suit of red and gold.

And Lemons really proved to be a great addition.

He hovered around Dan, helping him when he could, and better still, took to the work in quite a professional way.

Dan soon made an act with him.

He would toss Lemons up in the air and catch him, first on one hand and then on the other, hold him out at arm's length, and in various other ways display his wonderful strength with the boy.

By the time the show reached Buffalo it was the universal opinion that Dan's act would not be complete without Lemons.

As for the boy himself, he was as happy as a king.

He never left Dan if he could help it.

He took charge of his clothes, cleaned his shoes, did everything and anything he was asked to do all day long, and at night curled himself up and slept like a big dog outside of Dan's door; nor would any amount of persuasion induce him to sleep anywhere else.

By the time the show reached Buffalo, as nothing had been seen nor heard of Mybrico, the disagreeable incidents of the first days of Dan's engagement were pretty well forgotten.

Everywhere the strong boy was well received.

He was constantly inventing new acts, some of which proved great successes.

Nothing that was asked of him was ever refused, so when Mr. McTavish called him aside on the evening of the second day in Buffalo and proposed a change in the act Dan said yes in advance.

"I notice you've been practicing trapeze lately, young Sandow," said the manager, "and I've got an idea."

"What is it, sir?" asked Dan.

"Why, you seem to make out pretty well. Why not do your heavy weight act in midair, balancing yourself on the trapeze?"

"Just what I'm aiming at, Mr. McTavish."

"Ha, that's good! It will please everybody. When do you propose to try it?"

"I'll try it to-night if you like."

"Good! Do it. I believe you can."

And Dan did try it.

He succeeded splendidly.

Balancing himself in midair, thirty feet from the ground, he tossed the big weights about as easily as though he had been on solid earth.

And the act was made more wonderful from the fact that every time he wanted a new weight the strong boy descended by a series of trapezes, and went up again to his lofty perch weighted down by three hundred or five hundred pounds of iron, as the case might be.

By the time the show had reached Sandusky, Ohio, this new act of Dan's was one of the principal features of the night's performance, and never failed to bring down the house.

"Lemons, I'm going to take you up on the trapeze with me to-night," said Dan, on the morning of the third day after their opening in Sandusky; "will you come?"

"Course I will, Marse Dan. I go anywhere you say."

"But suppose you fall?"

"You wouldn't let me fall, Marse Dan. I'se not a-skeart."

"All right. We'll try it then. No matter if there should be a slip, you keep cool, Lemons. I'll look after you."

"Bet yer I will, Marse Dan. You'll make out all right."



and if yo' should be so unlucky as to happen to fall, why, den, I want to fall, too."

Dan could not help feeling touched.

It was something to be loved even by a poor colored boy like Lemons.

"I believe you'd lay down and let me walk on you if I asked it, Lemons," he laughed.

"Would it do you any good, yo' bet, Marse Dan," was Lemons' ready reply.

Night came.

The big tent was packed.

"Never saw a more enthusiastic audience in my life," said Mr. McTavish, looking into Dan's dressingroom just before the time came for our hero to go on.

"Why, it's pairfaictly ridiculous the way they go on at the clown."

"I heard them laughing," replied Dan, who was in the act of pulling on his fleshings. "Hope they'll give me as good a reception as they've given him."

"Never fear, mon. You always come in for your share, and more; don't you know you do?"

"Well, I suppose I've no right to complain."

"Well, I should say not. By the way, Barnum joins us to-morrow; did ye know?"

"No."

"He does; and it's a fine report I shall have to make of you."

Dan's heart was full of triumph when he went into the ring that night.

He was given a ringing reception.

So was Lemons.

For Dan made the boy bow to the applause as though he thought it had been meant for him.

This brought the house down again.

Dan laughed and kissed his hand.

Seizing the 300-pound weight in one hand, he snapped his finger at Lemons.

The little darky jumped first on his knee, then sprang lightly to his shoulders and stood there as still as a statue.

Daily practice for two weeks and more had made him quite expert in this.

Then Dan made a leap for the lowest trapeze, caught it with his left hand and pulled himself up, Lemons crouching down and holding on like a young monkey to Dan's head.

The audience applauded wildly.

Dan made a flying leap and caught the higher trapeze.

The applause was louder than ever.

Now came the task of raising himself to a standing position with the left hand only, weighted down as he was by Lemons and the big iron ball.

But Dan had not the least doubt of his ability to do it.

He did do it!

In a moment he stood erect as thunders of applause rang out through the tent.

Dan waved his left hand lightly, and tossed the iron ball up with his right.

The audience watched him breathlessly, when suddenly a thrill of horror seemed to run through the tent.

For the left hand rope of the trapeze parted like paper without the slightest warning, and Dan, Lemons and the big weight went whirling down upon the sawdust below.

No one knew better than McTavish that the breaking of the trapeze rope could not have been accidental.

With one bound the crusty manager rushed into the ring.

The clown, the ringmaster and several others had already gathered about the fallen boy.

Poor Dan!

He was quite unconscious.

The weight had fallen on his back, and for all McTavish could tell, might have killed him.

But Lemons was on his feet in an instant.

"Oh, is he hurt? Is he dead, Mr. Mac? Oh, oh, oh!" wailed the poor boy.

"Shut up, ye black imp!" snapped McTavish.

"Here, help me carry him out, some of you. Look at this rope—cut half through, as I live!"

"Ladies and gentlemen," he added aloud, addressing the restless audience, "it gives me great pleasure to inform you that the young Sandow is but slightly hurt. While we regret the accident, we must not let it interfere with the evening's performance. You will now have the pleasure of witnessing M'lle Astra, the daring bareback equestrienne, in her wonderful feats of horsemanship,"—and so on until M'lle Astra came dashing into the ring.

Of course it was Mr. McTavish's first duty to quiet the house, and he did it in good shape.

Then he rushed back into the tent to see how it fared with poor Dan.

"Where is he? Where is the bye?" he demanded of Budd West, whom he met on the road to Dan's dressing-room.

"I left him in his room, Mr. Mac," replied the trainer.

"Is he much hurt?"

"Don't think so."

"Of course you sent for the doctor?"

"Sent the nigger for one and one of my men for the other."

"Who's with him now?"

"No one. 'Tain't necessary. He was sitting up when I came out. He's only a little dazed—that's all."

"And it's mighty glad I am to hear it," said the manager, greatly relieved. "And bad luck to the villain who cut that rope!"

Away went Budd West, while Mr. McTavish kept on toward Dan's dressing-room.

He pushed aside the curtain and looked in.

The room was empty.

"Well, he can't be much hurted, seeing that he's taken himself off," muttered the manager, as he turned away.

But if Mr. McTavish had only been a little more observant he would have made a startling discovery.

The canvas behind the mattress upon which Barnum's young Sandow was laid when brought into the dressing-room had been slit down from about the height of a man's head with a sharp knife.

Outside of the tent, right behind the canvas, stood at that very moment a closed carriage, the door of which was just being shut.

"Drive for the lake—drive for all you're worth!" called a voice out through the little window in front.

The driver whipped up his horses, almost running down two persons who were hurrying across the lot toward the entrance to the tent.

One was a professional looking gentleman with a little black leather case in his hand, the other a colored boy dressed in a gorgeous uniform, over which a dark coat had been hastily drawn.

It was Lemons and the doctor he had hastily summoned to Dan.

"Blast that fellow! Does he mean to run us down?" cried the doctor, as he dodged the horses' heads.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DASTARDLY WORK.

"Flames and furies! But there's been foul play here!"

Thus exclaimed Manager McTavish, who had seen the accident from behind the canvas screen.



At the same instant a faint cry was heard.

"Help! Help!"

Now, the doctor did not realize where the cry came from.

For the instant he stood dazed as Lemons sprang away from him, leaped up behind the carriage, holding on as it went whirling away through the darkness.

But Lemons knew.

What it meant he never stopped to think, but he knew that it was Dan's voice that called for help, and that Dan must be inside that coach.

On dashed the horses through the darkness.

The cry was not repeated.

Lemons, clinging to the bar desperately, wondered if he could have been mistaken after all.

"No, no, it can't be! I heard him," he muttered.

Lemons paused.

For a head was now thrust out of the carriage window.

"Faster! Faster! What in thunder ails you that you are so slow?" called the man.

It was Senor Mybrico's face which was turned toward Lemons as the head was drawn in.

"They've got him!" thought the boy. "They've got him. The same old gang. It was they who cut the rope—they mean to kill him. Let them look out, though. By golly, I'll show 'em! Lemons will stick to Marse Dan to the last!"

Poor Dan!

Once more he was in the hands of the enemy, with no help near, save the poor boy he had befriended.

And the coach now turned into a lonely street with nothing but vacant lots on either side of it, and went dashing toward the lake front at increased speed.

## CHAPTER X.

### WHAT HAS BECOME OF DAN?

"Gone! Gone! Do you mean to tell me I've been brought here on a fool's errand?"

Little Dr. Middleton blustered.

In the excitement of dodging the carriage which so nearly ran him down as he approached the circus tent, Dr. Middleton did not notice what became of Lemons.

He hurried on, and entering the tent, soon found himself face to face with Mr. McTavish.

"So you came to see young Sandow, did you?" said the manager. "Well, mon, you're a day behind the fair—he's gone."

"Gone! Was he not hurt—was there no accident?"

"There was an accident, to be sure. Some villains cut a rope on which the lad was performing, but they tell me he wasn't much hurted; anyhow, he's gone home."

The doctor fumed and demanded a fee, but was promptly ordered out of the tent by the peppery McTavish.

Still the Scotchman did not altogether like it that Dan should have taken himself off without a word.

The broken rope of the trapeze had been duly examined and was found to have been cut almost through with a sharp knife.

No wonder it broke.

But who cut it?

McTavish determined that the matter should be sifted to the bottom.

But first of all it was necessary to see Dan himself, and Mr. McTavish waited rather impatiently for an opportunity to do so.

Morning came.

It brought no Dan—no Lemons—no word.

As a new act was to be rehearsed, this was serious.

A messenger was sent to Dan's hotel.

Back came the word that the boy had not been there since the afternoon of the day before.

"It's a plot, that's what it is; a trick! It's Mybrico trying to do Dan," thought M'lle Astra, who happened to be in the ring and heard McTavish read the note aloud.

"He was all right when I left him," said Budd West, the animal trainer, with a malicious smile.

There was more talk and much speculation as to what it all could mean.

"The police should be informed," declared McTavish.

"Pooh! I guess the boy has gone on a drunk," sneered West. "Give him the day to pull himself together in and he'll turn up all right."

But the day passed, and Dan did not turn up.

Night came, and still he was among the missing.

As he had been billed as usual, and the audience expected him, McTavish was in despair.

There were many calls for the young Sandow.

As he could not be produced McTavish had to make a speech, stating that Dan had not fully recovered from the shock of his fall the night before, but would positively appear on the following evening.

But the crusty Scotchman, who in his way had really grown to be quite fond of Dan, made these statements with a sinking heart.

"I'll start the detectives after him this very night," he resolved.

And he did so, although he said nothing to any one about it.

For Mr. McTavish was beginning to get greatly concerned for Dan's safety.

Moreover, Barnum was expected in Sandusky at any time, and McTavish knew just what to expect if he was to pop in suddenly and find matters as they now were.

Such was the situation when M'lle Astra left the big tent that evening.

It was a most disagreeable night.

A violent storm had arisen while the show was going on.

The wind was sweeping off upon the lake in a perfect hurricane.

As yet no rain had fallen, but the sky was black with scudding clouds, and there could be no doubt that rain was close at hand.

M'lle Astra drew her cloak around her and hurried toward her boarding-house, which was at no great distance away, her mind full of the mystery of Dan's disappearance.

For although Astra had kept her own counsel for reasons best known to herself, she had not been idle.

Naturally she suspected Mybrico of being at the bottom of Dan's disappearance.

As soon as she learned what had happened, the enterprising girl had engaged a detective to look into the matter, and she was now only too anxious to reach her room to see if the man had been there with any report.

But this was not to be.

Before she had gone far the fair equestrienne perceived a man hurrying on ahead of her in the direction of the lake front.

Even in the uncertain light she recognized Mr. Budd West, the animal trainer.

"I wonder what brings West here?" she thought. "He don't live this way, and— Ah, I thought so! Bless me! This is a chance that must not be lost. I shall have to turn detective myself."



For a man had suddenly stepped out from behind a small frame building on ahead and joined West.

It was Senor Mybrico.

M'lle Astra recognized him the instant he appeared.

The two shook hands and hurried on without stopping.

Soon they struck into the lonely street along which the carriage had gone the night before.

This brought them to the lake front, but far out of town.

There were but few houses in sight and these all of the poorer class, with here and there a factory or storage yard of some sort.

West and Mybrico entered a small hut not far from the bank of a little creek which ran into the lake.

Not once had they looked behind.

If they had done so they would have seen a woman wrapped in a heavy cloak hurrying after them.

It was Astra, of course.

She had never lost sight of the pair for a moment.

Now she stole up to the hut.

"It's here they've taken him. I know it—I'm sure of it," she murmured. "What shall I do?"

The wind howled around the hut, dismally.

The waves rolled up from the lake, splashing at her feet.

M'lle Astra stooped down, and fixing her eye to the keyhole, tried to get a glimpse of the interior of the hut.

But she could see nothing.

The indistinct murmur of voices reached her ears, but she was not able to distinguish words.

Suddenly a gust swept off the lake fearful in its intensity.

It caused the hut to sway. It blew M'lle Astra against the door with great violence.

Fearing that this would be heard by those inside, the girl drew back upon the sandy beach.

What was the matter?

A dull roaring sounded in her ears, but it was not the wind.

She turned to look off upon the lake to discover the meaning of the noise and saw her danger all too late.

There, rushing toward her, was a wall of water as high as the hut itself.

"A tidal wave!" gasped the girl, starting to run.

But she missed her footing and fell upon the wet, slippery sand.

Before she could recover herself the huge wave came rolling up upon the beach.

It was not a tidal wave, as those living on the shores of Lake Erie sometimes see them, but it was something very closely approaching it—a small one of its kind.

It struck against the hut with fearful force, almost sweeping it from its foundations.

Then came the retreat.

"Help! Help! Help!"

Three times the cry rang out upon the stillness of the night.

The beach was empty now.

Was the cry Astra's?

The light form of the equestrienne could be dimly seen struggling on the receding wave.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE TIDAL WAVE.

"Well, boy, have you come to your senses? Will you do as you are told?"

Senor Mybrico had been drinking.

He put this question in thick, uncertain accents, as accom-

panied by Mr. Budd West, he entered the lonely hut on the lake shore.

Lying upon a rude bed in one corner of the illy-furnished room was Barnum's young Sandow in about as helpless a condition as one can possibly imagine.

He was tied around and around with a heavy rope, bound hand and foot upon the bed, the rope ends being carried down underneath and fastened to a great iron ring in the floor of the hut.

"By Jerusalem!" cried Budd West, as he looked, "you don't mean he shall escape, do you?"

"No, I don't," hiccupped the ex-strong man, "and we had Satan's own time tying him up, and don't you forget it."

"Oh, I daresay. He's stronger than you are, Maybrick."

"It's a lie!"

"Nonsense. It's true, and you know it."

"I say it's false! I was off color the night we made the trial. I tell you I can handle just as many pounds as he can. San—hic—Sandow himself ain't in it alongside of me!"

They almost came to blows, for the discussion did not stop here.

As for Dan, he felt that a new revelation had dawned upon him.

Maybrick! Was Mybrico's real name Maybrick?

So Budd West had called him.

And the animal trainer's presence in the hut was a revelation, too.

If Dan had been himself, it would have taken more than Mybrico and those who were with him on the previous night to lay the boy a prisoner on that bed.

As it was, it gave them all they wanted to do.

Here Dan lay all night and all the day following.

Since Mybrico left, and that was at dawn, not a soul had been near him until now.

Where, then, was Lemons?

Had he forgotten his vow to stick to Dan till the last?

Certain it was that Dan had never seen Lemons since the moment of their fall from the trapeze.

"Come, shut up, Maybrick! You're drunk and don't know what you're talking about," said West at last. "I'm your best friend, and you know it. Do you want to quarrel with me?"

"No, I don't, Budd."

"Well, you're trying to. Attend to business if you can."

"By heaven, I will, then! See here, Dan Lewis, are you ready to sign?"

"I sign no papers without knowing what I'm signing," replied Dan, stoutly.

"You won't, hey?"

"No, I won't! I told you that last night when you tried to make me sign."

"Well, we'll see about that. Do you know who I am?"

"Well, I begin to have an idea."

"I'm the strongest man in the world, that's who I am!" blustered Mybrico, "and I'll crush you like glass unless you yield to my will."

Dan eyed him steadily.

"I wasn't thinking of your strength," he said.

"Well, what then?"

"I have my opinion of a man who will rob his own father."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. I handled you once, Sam Maybrick, and if it comes to a pinch, I guess I can handle you again. I know you now."

With a cry of rage the ex-strong man jumped to the bed and struck the helpless boy a crushing blow.

Dan gave a sharp cry, gasped and shuddered.

His eyes closed; he lay there white and still.



"You idiot! Now you've killed the goose that might have laid the golden egg!" cried Budd West, seizing Mybrico and dragging him away.

"I don't care! Let me get at him! If he ain't dead I'll blame soon finish him!"

"You fool! What would you do? As I understand it, your only hope of getting that Chicago property is to get your cousin to sign off his claim."

There was deep meaning in these words for Mybrico, evidently.

He hesitated and drew back.

But the mischief had been done already for Dan.

In his weakened condition the blow had been altogether too much for him.

He lay there all unconscious of what was being said.

Meanwhile the wind was howling about the hut fearfully.

Suddenly there came another sound.

It was a rushing, roaring noise.

The great wave was approaching.

It dashed against the hut with fearful force.

The frail door gave way before it.

West and Mybrico were thrown from their feet by the rush of water which came surging into the hut.

And the wave in its retreat swept Mybrico with it.

"Help! Help! Help!"

Now came the cry.

Budd West managed to regain a foothold just outside the door.

"Maybrick! Maybrick!" he shouted.

There was no answer.

The animal trainer strained his eyes off upon the lake.

He saw nothing of the ex-strong man.

But in a moment he saw the wave coming again.

At the same instant a light flashed from behind him out upon the lake.

"Heavens! What now! This is horrible!" gasped West, looking back into the hut.

And the sight which met his eyes was indeed startling in the extreme.

The table upon which stood the lamp lighted by Mybrico upon his first entrance to the hut had been overturned by the rush of water.

The lamp, falling upon the bed, had broken; the bed was all in flames.

Budd West's first impulse was to rush in and put the fire out, or at least rescue Dan. As for Mybrico, he believed him to be already past help.

What he might have done if the wave had not come it is hard to say.

But it did come.

West dodged to one side and ran.

At the same instant he caught sight of a dark figure bounding toward the hut.

This settled Dan's fate, as far as Budd West was concerned.

The animal trainer was a thorough coward and as mean and selfish as he was cowardly.

"Let 'em look out for themselves; it ain't my business, anyway," he thought.

Turning, he hurried across the vacant lots, leaving Dan to his fate.

## CHAPTER XII.

### DAN TO THE RESCUE.

Was it the first rush of the wave that aroused Dan Lewis? Or would consciousness have returned to the boy in any case?

It is hard to say.

But certain it is that Dan was himself again almost as the lamp fell and the bed took fire.

What had happened?

Barnum's young Sandow hardly knew.

For a second he was almost overcome by the horror of his situation.

The burning sheets had ignited the straw mattress.

It was blazing fiercely.

Dan's hair seemed to rise in horror.

Again and again he had struggled with his bonds, without being able to make the slightest impression.

But he had made no such effort as he put forth now, when Budd West turned away from the door of the hut.

Three ordinary men, pulling on those ropes, would have made no impression on them.

But Dan threw all his mighty strength into the effort.

One rope snapped.

His hands were free, but he was still chained to the burning bed.

"Help! Mr. West! Come back! Save me, for heaven's sake!" he shouted.

But although Budd West neither heard nor heeded, other help was close at hand.

It was the wave.

Compared with this the first was a mere baby.

It swept into the hut, covering the bed and Dan on it.

In an instant the fire was out and Dan half suffocated.

Again the wave retreated, and something fell heavily upon poor Dan.

"Oh, golly! Help! Save me! Don't let me be drowned, Marse Dan!"

The something was kicking, struggling and shouting.

"Lemons!" gasped Dan.

"Oh, golly! Yes, yes! Whar dat fire now? Golly, I don't know whether it's roasted or drowned you'se goin' to be, but I'se goin' to save you anyhow, Marse Dan."

In times of emergency it is the unexpected that usually happens.

What could have been more unexpected to Dan than to find Lemons sprawling upon him, brought into the hut by the wave.

"Lemons, is it really you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, yes! I'd have been here before, Marse Dan, but I got throwed off that carriage and knocked in de head. Golly, it most killed me, and dey took me to de hospital. I'se only just now managed to gib dem de slip, an' you bet I didn't lose no time getting back here, for I seen dey was a-headin' for dis house, an' de water cotched me an'——"

"Stop! Stop, Lemons!" cried Dan, breaking in upon this flood of explanation. "If you want to help me, get out your knife and cut me free before the water comes in again."

Lemons, who had already slid to the floor and was standing knee deep in the rapidly retreating water, lost no time in obeying.

Out came the knife.

"Look out you don't cut me!" cried Dan, for it was as dark as Egypt in the hut now.

"Dat's all right. Golly, where all dat water come from? Dere goes one—now for de udder."

But Lemons worked too slowly for Dan.

Able to sit up now, he seized the knife and had himself free in a moment.

Weak and dizzy, he staggered to his feet.

"Where are those men?" he gasped.

"I seen one feller running away," said Lemons. "Looked to me powerful like Marse Budd West."

"It was West. Where is he?"



"Dunno. How yo' feel, Marse Dan?"

"Hark!"

Suddenly a cry was heard above the howling of the wind.

"Help! Save me!"

"Dat's a woman!" cried Lemons, as following Dan he rushed out of the hut.

At the same instant a lightning flash lit up the sky with the brightness of day followed almost instantly by a crash of thunder, which made Lemons cry out that the end of the world had come.

"I see her!" cried Dan.

He did not see anything then, but while the light lasted he had perceived a little way off shore a woman's form.

The unfortunate creature was clinging to a piece of timber, tossed up and down by the waves.

Then again came the cry.

"Lemons! Oh, Lemons!" shouted Dan.

"What is it, Marse Dan?"

"We must save her, Lemons!"

"Golly! How? I can't swim and you——"

"Wait! Lemons, get that rope!"

Lemons flew to obey.

Dan threw off his coat and shoes.

Forgotten was the terrible experience through which he had just passed.

Forgotten the fact that he was lame from head to foot from the effects of his terrible fall and the cramped position in which he had lain for so many hours since.

When Lemons came with the rope Dan fastened it around his waist.

"Keep up your courage!" he had shouted long before this.

"Hold on! I'll help you! I'll save you if I can."

"You can't never do it, Marse Dan," protested Lemons. "You'll be drowned yourself."

"I can do it, and I will. Look out, Lemons. Keep tight hold of the rope and pull for all you're worth when I give the word."

Just then the lightning flashed again, and the rain fell in torrents.

Again Dan caught sight of the timber.

The woman was still clinging to it.

"Good! I've got my bearings now," muttered Dan.

Without the slightest hesitation he plunged into the lake.

The water was icy cold.

It chilled the boy to the very marrow, but it did not deter him from putting forth all his wonderful strength.

"Help! Help! I can't hold on any longer!" came the cry above the howling of the wind.

"I'm coming! I'm coming!" was Dan's answer.

"Oh, for another flash!" he thought

Just one to show him the direction to take.

Then, as if in answer to the boy's prayer, the heavens were again illuminated.

About forty feet from him Dan saw the woman.

Her face was turned toward him.

Merciful heavens!

Could he ever forget that face?

It was M'lle Astra.

As Barnum's young Sandow saw her she saw him—knew him.

"Dan! Dan!" she screamed. "Oh, save me, Dan!"

Then the heavens were darkened, and the thunder rolled and rattled over the lake.

Dan swam for the spot where Astra had vanished as never man nor boy swam before.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### IS DAN DEAD?

"Hold on, Louise! Hold on!"

"I hear you, Dan! I won't let go! But, oh, be quick! I can't endure much more!"

"I've found you now! This time it's sure! There! Now then! Oh, heaven! What's this? Am I too late?"

Dan put out his hand, expecting to grasp Louise Brown—M'lle Astra, as she is better known to us.

But he did not.

He grasped the plank instead.

"Louise! Louise!" he shouted.

But there was no answer save the howling of the wind.

Brave Dan!

He had fought for this moment, struggled all he knew.

Twice he lost his bearings in the darkness, and now that success seemed certain to have the poor girl perish under his very eyes was a little too hard.

"She has lost her grip," thought the boy. "She has been washed off, but——"

"Dan! Dan! Save me, Dan!"

Suddenly the cry came.

Came out of the darkness on his right.

Dan struck bravely out in the direction of the sound.

"Courage! Courage!" he shouted. "Do not give it up, Louise! If once I can get my hands on you it will be all right!"

A moment more served to accomplish this.

Louise could swim a little, and she managed to keep up until Dan reached her.

Fortunately a lightning flash came just at that very moment.

Dan contrived to get his arm around the drowning girl under her arm.

It was the best he could do. It would keep her from throwing her arms round his neck, at all events, he thought, as he spoke to her in soothing tones.

There was no answer.

Louise hung a dead weight upon poor Dan now.

Again he spoke, and still again.

"Merciful heaven! Is she dead?" he murmured.

There was no means of determining.

Dan's only thought now was to get ashore.

Treading water and supporting his fair burden as best he could, Dan reached his unoccupied hand behind him and caught the rope.

He thought to signal Lemons.

Even such feeble strength as the little colored boy could exert at the end of the rope would be a great help to him.

But again disappointment came to Dan.

As he pulled there was no resistance.

The rope came running toward him through the water.

"Confound it all! Lemons has let go!" he muttered.

"Lemons! Lemons! Oh, Lemons!" he shouted.

But the wind had shifted.

It was now blowing off shore.

There was no answer.

It was doubtful if Lemons could hear.

"No matter! I can swim it!" thought Dan.

And bravely he set about it.

But the attempt brought failure.

The force of the wind was tremendous.

In his weakened condition Dan could make no headway against it.

With the next flash of lightning he perceived, to his horror,



that the shore was now a very considerable distance away and steadily receding.

Instead of making headway, Dan was not able to hold his own.

Still he did not lose courage.

Bravely he clung to his unconscious burden.

Once he thought he heard above the howling of the wind the voice of Lemons calling.

But he could not be sure of this.

Now the darkness seemed to increase, if such a thing were possible, and the rain came down in a perfect flood.

"Oh, Dan! Dan! Are we going to be drowned?"

Suddenly Louise spoke.

The simple question sent a thrill of hope to the boy's heart.

"Not if I know it!" he cried. "But I was afraid you were gone already, Louise."

"I was washed off the plank! Oh, Dan, this is terrible!"

"Courage! I've lots of strength left yet!"

"But why don't you try to swim—to go ashore?"

"Can't! The wind is too much for me. Let us be as quiet as possible. It may go down in a minute and then my chance will come."

"I'm afraid it's all up with us, Dan."

"Don't say it—don't think it! Louise, how came you to be here? Is this more of Mybrico's wicked work?"

"Yes—no! I followed him. I thought I would find you, Dan."

"Ah! Then it was your effort to help me that brought this upon you?"

"The wave caught me, Dan. I——"

It was a strange situation for long explanations.

Now suddenly Louise's explanation was cut short by the hoarse whistle of a steamer sounding through the darkness right ahead.

"What's that?" gasped the girl.

"A steamer! Heavens! I hope it don't run us down!"

"Call! Shout! Perhaps they may hear us!"

But it seemed a forlorn hope.

Dan raised his voice in one mighty cry for help.

Again and again he called.

But there was no answer.

Once more the hoarse whistle sounded.

Dan could see the dark outline of the steamer's prow close upon them.

"Help!"

"Help!"

"Save us!"

"Hello, there! Is anyone calling?" came the answer at last.

A man was looking over the steamer's rail.

"Yes! Yes! Here! Here!" cried Dan.

"Hold hard! I'll throw you a line!"

Dan heard the bell in the engine-room ring.

The grinding of the propeller ceased.

Down came the steamer right upon them.

Lights flashed.

Now there was not one man alone but many crowded at the rail.

"Hello! Are you still there?" called the voice which had first spoken.

"Right here!" yelled Dan.

"By jove, there's two of 'em, and one's a woman," said the voice.

Then suddenly the rope was thrown.

Dan saw it coming, for the light of a big reflecting lantern was now turned upon the water.

He flung up his unoccupied hand and caught it.

"Louise, now is your chance," he murmured. "Courage! You are as good as saved!"

"But you, Dan?"

"Oh, I'm all right. You can't drown me. Here, let me make the rope fast under your arms."

"Look alive there or we'll pass you?" came the shout from the deck.

There was no time to make the rope fast.

Dan saw that.

"Hold on to it, Louise!" he cried. "Hold on for all you are worth!"

Then, as Louise clutched the rope, Dan lifted her on both hands high out of the water.

The men on board the steamer called out in amazement.

Dan was treading water and holding Louise at arm's length above his head.

"Pull in!" called the man at the other end of the rope.

And Louise, holding on for dear life, was drawn on board the steamer.

"Bravo, young fellow!" cried the man with the lantern. "That was well done."

"Throw him the rope—don't talk!" cried another.

The rope was flung down.

But to their surprise no one grasped it.

"Where is he?" cried one.

"Show your glim down there!" shouted another.

The reflector was turned upon the water.

But not on Dan!

Nothing could be seen of the boy now.

"He's a goner!" said the man who held the rope. "Start her up, cap. We've saved the girl's life, anyhow; it's no fault of ours if the feller is drowned."

"No, no! Save him! Save him!" screamed Louise, wildly.

But they would not heed her.

The bell rang, the engine started, and the big lake steamer began moving on its way.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE IRON CHEST.

What had happened to Dan?

Barnum's young Sandow hardly knew himself when a few moments later on he found himself clinging to a vessel's spar, tossed here and there upon the angry waters of the lake.

All seemed misty and uncertain to him.

He dimly remembered that as he lifted Louise something struck him in the stomach.

The pain was excruciating.

Dan, for the moment, must have lost consciousness.

The fact was, the end of the spar struck him.

It was part of a small lake schooner which had gone to pieces in a previous gale.

The force of the blow was enough to kill any ordinary man.

And yet Dan, all unconscious as he was, must have clutched the spar and held on like grim death.

When he came to his senses he was holding on still, but the big lake steamer was moving away in the distance.

Nothing but the dark outline of her hull could be seen, and that was rapidly receding.

Dan realized the situation after a few dazed seconds of uncertainty.

He called, shouted, yelled, but all to no purpose.



"I'm a goner! That's sure," he murmured. "Anyhow, I've done my best and Louise is saved!"

His strength now began to fail him as his courage oozed away.

He thought of the circus and the triumphs he had achieved.

He wondered what McTavish would think when he heard Astra's story.

He wondered if Barnum would be sorry when he heard that his young Sandow was dead.

He was still wondering, when suddenly the spar struck bottom and grounded.

"This is strange," thought Dan. "Can we have run ashore?"

He peered ahead into the gloom, and could just distinguish a dark, rocky mass ahead of him.

This was nothing like the low shore about Sandusky.

What then could it be?

Dan had not heard of the numerous islands of Lake Erie.

Somehow he had conceived the notion that there were no islands in the great lakes.

But the spar had struck one, for all that, and a moment later Dan crawled up upon the slippery rocks more thoroughly used up than he had ever been in all his life before.

He tried to penetrate the darkness and discover what sort of a place he had struck, but it was useless.

Finding a sheltered spot under an overhanging ledge a little way back from the shore, he flung himself down and lay there panting.

He closed his eyes and prayed that death might come quickly, for then he thought he was dying.

Nothing of the sort!

It was only intense fatigue that ailed the boy.

Before he knew it he had fallen fast asleep there upon the wet, slippery rocks.

The next he actually did know it was broad daylight and the sun was shining brightly upon him.

The storm had passed away with the night.

Lake Erie lay spread out before him as calm and peaceful as though no wind had ever ruffled its surface.

Dan sprang up, shook himself and tried to recall the adventures of the night.

Then he ascended the rocks and looked around.

He was on a small islet far out upon the lake.

In the dim distance the city of Sandusky could be seen.

It was not so bad then, after all.

He might have to stay here a few hours, even a day, or perhaps two, but what matter?

Sooner or later he would be able to hail some passing craft, and then everything would be right.

He was thinking of all this, moving about over the rocks here and there, when suddenly he stumbled against something hard which almost threw him down.

"Hello! What in thunder is this?" muttered Dan, staring at the ground.

For what his foot had struck seemed to be the corner of an iron box or chest wedged in between the rocks.

It had been deeply buried in the earth at one time, evidently.

But this storm and others had washed over the spot, uncovering the corner upon which Dan stumbled.

As for the rest, it was still buried, and a stone of great size and weight lay over it.

Here was mystery.

Dan's curiosity was aroused at once.

He scraped away the earth from the stone to the projecting metal.

It was certainly an iron chest of great size.

So much of the top and sides as could be seen were heavily studded with rusty rivets with enormous heads.

Dan began to get excited.

Thoughts of buried treasure flashed over him.

He seized the stone and tried to lift it bodily.

In this he was foiled.

The stone would easily have tipped the scales a thousand pounds.

But Dan did what probably no man in Sandusky could have done.

He turned the stone over without difficulty, and after a few moments' active work had uncovered the iron chest.

It was some three feet in length by two in width. Its depth was uncertain as yet.

Dan worked away at one end until he had uncovered a rusty iron handle.

He seized it with both hands and pulled with all his wonderful strength.

The chest resisted all his efforts at first.

But gradually he loosened it.

Now it became a question of dead weight.

The chest was heavier than the stone.

But for all that Dan managed to lift it out of the hole where it had been hidden for heaven knows how many years.

The boy's excitement was now at the highest pitch.

He examined the rusty lock, turned the chest over and over.

Something rattled inside as he turned it, and on the bottom Dan's sharp eyes caught sight of the following, painted upon the iron in letters almost effaced:

"H. B. M. FRIGATE SWAN, 1812."

Dan gave an exclamation of surprise.

Although he had not enjoyed very much schooling, he had always been a great reader.

American history had always been his favorite.

Not six months before he had been reading up about the naval battles fought upon Lake Erie during the War of 1812.

Among other things, he had read an account of the sinking of the British frigate Swan, and the loss of a large amount of gold, said to have been on board for the purpose of paying off the sailors and marines of the lake fleet.

Had he found the missing treasure?

It seemed as though there could scarcely be a doubt of it.

Dan turned the chest on its side and looked at the big stone.

Only for a moment.

Then he stooped down and grasped it.

Every muscle strained.

The veins in the boy's forehead stood out like so many cords.

Could he lift it?

He could—he did! Up came the stone. Dan held it above the iron chest for an instant and let it fall.

It struck the iron with fearful force.

The lid dropped back, and, following it, flowed a stream of golden sovereigns as new and bright as the day they were coined.

## CHAPTER XV.

HERR KLINKENFELS KNOCKED OUT.

"We've got to have a strong man, that's flat, McTavish," said Mr. Barnum, leaning back in his chair.



"And I agree with you, sir. It's one of the things that must be, so I say let's give this Dutchman a chance."

"I don't like his looks, Mac."

"Nor I, sir. I don't like furreners nohow, but what are we going to do?"

"Besides, I feel as though it was in a certain sense treason to the memory of that bright lad to engage anybody in his place so soon."

"Ah, an' he was a bright lad, Mr. Barnum. It's a sad affair altogether, but business is business, and——"

"Oh, that's right, of course. The Greatest Show on Earth can't stop for anyone's memory. It's got to be kept up to date, and if this Herr What's-his-name can fill the bill you better engage him; but he'll not do for us what Dan Lewis did, you may depend."

"Perhaps not. I'm afeered not."

"By the way, Mac, have the detectives sent in any report?"

"Yes. I had a letter last night from the chief of the Pinkerton Bureau in Sandusky. They give the case up."

"Too bad! What can have become of the boy?"

"Don't ask me, Mr. Barnum. Then there is Astra, too. Is her disappearance a bit less strange than Dan's?"

"Oh, you can't tell anything about women. She may have been miffed at something and gone off without sending us any word."

"Not a bit of it. She's not that kind."

"Strange all around. But the fact that the colored boy should have disappeared too makes it look just a little as if they had all taken French leave together—at least, I should be inclined to think so if there was any reason for it and circumstances were different, but as it is——"

But just here Mr. Barnum was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Budd West, who had come to consult him in regard to some matters concerning the menagerie, which put an end to the conversation for the time.

Several weeks had passed since the storm swept over Lake Erie.

Barnum's great show had left Sandusky and moved on to Toledo.

From Toledo it went to Detroit, and now the opening night in Chicago had come, and the big tent was pitched on the lake not far from the foot of Washington street, a privilege, by the way, which the city authorities would not have been willing to grant to any other showman in the United States.

Business in the East had delayed Barnum, and he had only just now joined the show.

But he had been kept fully informed by Mr. McTavish of all that had happened, and his orders sent by telegraph were to spare no expense to find the missing ones.

So the Pinkertons put their best men on the case, but their efforts had all come to naught, as the above conversation shows.

On the morning of their arrival in Chicago an elderly person, wearing a heavy gray beard, and speaking broken English, applied for the position made vacant by Dan's disappearance.

He gave the name of Herr Klinkenfels, and claimed to have just come from Europe.

Later in the day Herr Klinkenfels was introduced to Barnum and given a private rehearsal.

He did fairly well, and was engaged for the week in Chicago on trial.

The public demanded a strong man, and as there was no other available, the matter was thus hurriedly arranged.

"There's one thing sure, Mr. Man," said Barnum in his offhand way, "you've got to lift the platform with at least

six men on it, the same as my young Sandow did, or we won't pull together very long."

"I can do dat, sar," was the reply. "I vill show you dat dot poy Sandow vas shust novhere alongside mit me."

Barnum let it go at that.

But when the evening performance came, Herr Klinkenfels, although he did well enough with his big dumbbells and heavy weights, did not lift the platform.

Barnum was very angry.

He called the strong man into his presence after the show and demanded the reason why.

"Ah, vell, ve do him to-morrow," said Herr Klinkenfels, shrugging his shoulders.

"See that you do, if you want to stay with me," was the curt reply.

Of course there was no chance to dodge the issue after that.

The platform was brought out by the supes, while Herr Klinkenfels was practicing with his weights.

The big tent was packed that night.

But somehow the audience did not seem to take to Herr Klinkenfels very much.

Close down in front sat a young man elegantly dressed in the height of fashion, wearing a light beard and mustache.

He smiled in a sarcastic way as the platform was brought into the ring.

"Do you think he can do it?" asked a reporter, who sat next to him taking notes.

"No, but I can," was the strange reply.

"You?"

"Yes."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Wait and see. I'll show you if he fails."

"I guess that young fellow is off his base," thought the reporter, as he turned his attention to the ring.

The time had come now.

Barnum himself entered the ring.

Hundreds recognized him.

The big tent fairly rang with cheers as the great showman smiled and bowed.

But a moment later and all had changed.

Hisses loud and unmistakable were heard on every side.

For Herr Klinkenfels, with his shoulders under the platform upon which stood the clown, McTavish, the ringmaster, and three other good-sized men, was entirely unable to raise it from the horses more than a few inches.

He tugged and strained, grew red in the face, but all to no purpose.

Evidently the audience had heard of the young Sandow and were in no mood to put up with any such sorry show as this.

Barnum was furious.

But he knew too much to betray himself to the audience.

Herr Klinkenfels came out from under the platform and bowed to the audience as though he had done the act to the queen's taste.

Suddenly the young man stood up in the front row.

"I'd like to be given a chance to try that, if there is no objection," he called out in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the tent.

The clown laughed.

So did the audience.

"Let him try it! Let him try it!" several voices called out.

"Sit down, you idiot! You must be full!" whispered the reporter, tugging at the young man's coat.

But instead of sitting down the young man calmly vaulted



over the rail and walked toward the platform upon which the men still stood.

"May I try it?" he called out. "I suppose you think I'm rather cheeky, but I'm sure I can lift that thing clean off the horses if you'll only give me the chance,

Barnum laughed and winked confidentially at the audience.

"The young man is off his base," whispered McTavish to the clown, while the great Klinkenfels stood silently scowling.

"Try it, by all means," said Barnum. "If you think you are stronger than my strong man, sir, let the audience see what you can do."

It seemed all a huge joke to the professionals.

The audience began to think it was part of the performance.

Without removing his swallow-tail the young man stooped and raised the platform entirely clear of the horses, balanced it upon his shoulders, and, amid deafening cheers, walked off into the ring.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### ON THE TRAIL.

"How is the lady now?"

"No better. Cold and long exposure have brought the inevitable results."

"You mean that she will die?"

"I mean that she is very seriously sick. Whether she recovers or not depends entirely upon the treatment she receives."

"As my wife she will only receive the best that money can buy for her, once we get ashore."

"Your wife! I was not aware that the lady we rescued last night was your wife."

The young doctor looked at the speaker in amazement.

"Well, why shouldn't she be?" was demanded. "I've explained to the captain—he knows just how the matter stands."

"Oh, that's all right, sir. Of course I am not saying anything, only the lady is rather young to be married at all."

"Young or old, she is my wife. If you will allow it, I will go and see her now."

"Go, by all means, if you wish, but you will find her entirely out of her mind."

Now, this conversation took place on the deck of the lake steamer Enchantress, running from Buffalo to Chicago, stopping at all important points.

It was the morning after the great storm. And the few passengers who were on board the Enchantress were full of the events of the previous night.

For just after the steamer left her wharf at Sandusky, the storm broke upon them.

Two lives were saved within a few minutes of each other.

One was the man who had been talking with the young doctor attached to the steamer.

The other was a mysterious young woman who had gone almost mad over the loss of a young man seen with her in the water, but drowned while the rescue was being made.

Strangely enough, the man first rescued claimed the girl as his wife, telling a plausible story about an overturned boat.

Who the young man that had lost his life was he professed not to know.

This gentleman, who gave the name of Maybrick, was soon on good terms with the captain of the Enchantress, who believed his story implicitly.

Perhaps this was because Mr. Maybrick had plenty of money and spent it freely.

So long as they were on board the Enchantress they would remain with the steamer until she reached Chicago, he said.

As the days passed a rumor spread among the crew and passengers that Mrs. Maybrick, who was still confined to her state-room, had become hopelessly insane.

Now, of course, it will be readily understood that Mrs. Maybrick was none other than Mlle. Astra.

A strange fate had thrown the poor girl into the hands of her enemy.

All her efforts to make her real situation understood were looked upon by the young doctor and the few others who came in contact with her as the ravings of a disordered mind.

When the Enchantress reached Chicago the girl was hurried away in a close carriage, and the incident soon forgotten.

The captain little imagined when he saw the poor, pale-faced little woman carried down the gang-plank that he had been lending himself to a great crime.

For from the first day Astra had been kept under the influence of drugs, which might well have rendered her what Mybrico claimed she was—hopelessly insane.

The Enchantress lay at her wharf near the Rush street bridge for more than a week loading grain for eastern ports.

One evening just at dusk a cab drove hurriedly up to the wharf.

An elegantly dressed young man sprang out, and after a brief glance at the steamer went on board.

"This is the steamer Enchantress?" he demanded of the mate, who met him at the head of the gang-plank.

"It is, sir."

"I'd like to see Captain Gorman—is he aboard?"

"Yes, sir. You'll find him in the cabin."

"Take him my card, please."

The card bore the name:

"Mr. Myron Strong."

Impressed with a sense of the importance of this unusual visitor, the mate made haste to deliver the card.

"What's he want?" demanded Captain Gorman, as he read the name aloud.

"Blest if I know."

"Show him in!"

Mr. Strong was shown into the cabin.

After a few preliminary words he came directly to business.

"Captain, I understand that you made a rescue on Lake Erie just outside of Sandusky in the big storm of a few weeks ago?"

"Well, I did," replied the captain. "In fact, I made two rescues."

"Ah! It is a young woman I refer to."

"Yes, sir. I rescued a young woman, and strangely enough I rescued her husband, too."

"Her husband?"

"Yes. He came aboard first, and the young woman was heard calling for help a few moments later. There was a young fellow with her who, unfortunately, we were not able to get. I have no doubt he was drowned."

"What was the name of the man?" demanded Mr. Strong, eagerly.

"Maybrick."

"Ah, I thought so!"

Mr. Myron Strong was much agitated.

He sprang from his seat and began pacing the cabin floor.

"And he claimed to be her husband?" he demanded in troubled tones.

"He did. Do you know these people?"



"I do! Did she never deny his claim?"

"Well, yes. I believe she did; but she was out of her mind, poor thing!"

"Ah! I see!"

"There is something wrong, you think?" asked the captain, anxiously.

"Something wrong! It's all wrong! Captain, you have, without knowing it, lent yourself to the work of a villain."

"I can't believe it."

"It's true."

"Is this young woman anything to you?"

"She is everything to me. I have been searching for her for the past three weeks. Unfortunately I twice got the wrong clew, and have been to Buffalo after one steamer, and to Duluth after another. It is only to-day that I learned that the Enchantress was the one which I sought."

"Well, I don't understand this business," said the captain anxiously, "and I'm sure I don't care to be mixed up in any trouble. This man Maybrick was heard shouting for help, and we threw him a line, and——"

"Was he swimming?"

"Yes; he seemed well able to swim."

"What did he say when taken aboard?"

"He said he had been out in a sailboat, which was upset, but now I come to think of it he did not mention his wife until——"

"Until she was rescued a few moments later?"

"That's what I was going to say."

"Exactly. I understand it all, captain. I presume you can give me Mr. Maybrick's address?"

"No, I can't. He left us as soon as we reached Chicago."

"And took the girl with him?"

"Why, of course."

"And you have no idea where they went?"

"Not the faintest."

"How did they go?"

"In a public hack."

"Did you notice the number?"

"Well, yes, as it happens, I did. It was number 544."

"Enough said. I'm a thousand times obliged to you."

"Don't mention it. If I can be of any service——"

But Mr. Myron Strong did not even wait for Captain Gorman to finish his sentence.

Bidding him a hearty good-night, he left the cabin, and hurrying down the gang-plank, leaped into his hack.

"At last!" he murmured. "At last I've got a clew! Poor Louise! There can be no doubt now that she has fallen into the hands of Mybrico. No matter! I will save her! I will save her if I have to spend every dollar—if I follow her to the end of the earth."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE MYSTERIOUS MR. STRONG.

Amid the deafening applause which rang out through Barnum's big tent, the young gentleman who had lifted the platform returned to the horses and gently lowered the boards upon them.

Again the audience broke out.

They clapped, called, whistled.

It was impossible for Barnum to make himself heard.

For the great showman, but a shade less excited than his audience, was calling for the young gentleman to stop.

The request was unheeded.

The young man hurried across the ring, stepped lightly over the rope, and vanished among the audience.

Barnum dispatched two ushers after him immediately, but he could not be found.

Meanwhile the show went right on.

Herr Klinkenfels vanished when Mr. Barnum came to look for him.

"He'd better get out!" stormed the old showman. "He's not worth his salt, and under no consideration must he be allowed to appear in the ring again."

"Very good, sir," replied Mr. McTavish. "But what about the other?"

"I must find him, that's all. If money will hire that young man he will be hired."

"He doesn't look like a professional, Mr. Barnum."

"I don't suppose he is, but money may induce him to become one. Where's Joe Moss? Why don't he come back?"

Now, Joe Moss was the detective attached to the front of the house.

Barnum had already seen him, and given him orders to find out what had become of the mysterious young man.

While they were still speaking the detective was announced.

"Let him come right in," said Barnum.

The detective was ushered into the little room which Barnum usually occupied as an office when with the show.

"Well, did you find out what I wanted to know?" the king of showmen demanded.

"Yes, and no!" was the answer.

"What do you mean?"

"I couldn't find out his name, but I did find out where he went."

"Well, let's have it!"

"He had his own trap waiting for him; he jumped right in and was driven off."

"Driven where?"

"Of course I don't know, for he was gone before I got out there, but——"

"Well, well! Spit it out, Moss!"

"His tiger, a young darky, told one of the tent boys that his master was stopping at the Hotel Richelieu. I suppose I could find out all about him if I went up there."

"I'll go myself!" cried Barnum. "Call my carriage, Moss."

"Very good, sir."

"Be quick about it. Mac, what are you grinning at? What ails you, man?"

"Ah, well, nothing much, only I say this, there's only one lad in the world that can lift as that fellow lifted, barring it's Sandow himself."

"Nonsense! You mean to hint that this mysterious boy is my young Sandow?"

"I dinna hint, sir. I only say my say."

"But what in the world would Dan Lewis be living at the Richelieu for? Would he be likely to own a trap and have servants to wait on him? Mac, don't you be a fool."

As the conversation was becoming somewhat personal, it was just as well that Mr. Barnum's carriage was announced.

The great showman hastily left the tent, and was driven to the Hotel Richelieu.

Here he had no difficulty in learning the name of the owner of the trap.

"It must be Mr. Strong you mean," said the hotel clerk, in answer to his inquiry.

"Strong! Humph! I should say that was probably the name. Is he in?"

"I believe he is."

"Send him my card."

The clerk stared when he read the name "P. T. Barnum" upon the card.

"Take Mr. Barnum's card to Parlor B," he said, to the call-boy who appeared in answer to the bell.



"Who is this young Strong?" demanded Barnum, as the boy hurried away.

"He's from the East somewhere, I believe, Mr. Barnum."

"Rich?"

"Millionaire, I understand."

Barnum's hopes fell.

"You are sure of this?" he inquired.

"Of course, I am not sure—how can one be? He spends money like water, though, and the general report is that he is worth millions."

"How long has he been here?"

"Several days."

Just then the call-boy returned.

To the great showman's chagrin he bore Mr. Strong's regrets.

Mr. Strong was very sorry, but he was too busy to see Mr. Barnum just then.

The hotel clerk's eyes opened to think anyone should refuse to see a man so famous.

But Barnum took it very coolly.

He called for a sheet of paper and wrote as follows:

"Mr. Barnum desires to say to Mr. Strong that if he is, as Mr. B. understands to be the case, the man who exhibited such wonderful powers of strength this evening, it would be a great favor as well as business if Mr. Strong would make it convenient to arrange an interview."

This note was signed and sent up.

Back came the answer in a moment.

"Mr. Strong regrets that he will be unable to grant Mr. Barnum's request. He will, however, be present at the show tomorrow night, and if the platform is ready to be lifted, will be pleased to lift it. As for business, Mr. Strong has no desire to enter into any at the present time."

"Cool, by thunder!" muttered the great showman, as he crumpled up the note. "But I suppose I've got to take this young man as I find him. Fact is, I'm glad enough to see him again in my ring on any terms."

Thus saying, Barnum left the hotel.

He was uncertain whether he was on the eve of engaging a new strong man who would equal his young Sandow, or whether he had insulted some young New York millionaire.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### DAN TURNS DETECTIVE.

"There he goes, Lemons! Bless his heart, there he goes!"

Two faces were peering out of one of the upper windows of the Hotel Richelieu as Barnum drove away.

One was white, the other was black.

If the owner of the black face answered to the name of Lemons then surely the possessor of the white one could be no one but Dan Lewis.

Such was indeed the case, but it was part of Dan's policy not to betray his identity just then.

"Quick, Lemons!" he exclaimed, as they turned away from the window. "Now he's gone you must make haste. We've already lost too much time."

"I'll be ready in two shakes, Marse Dan. Just gimme time to change my clothes."

"All right. Fly!"

And Lemons left the room in a hurry.

Dan lit a cigar, threw himself down in one of the big easy chairs, and began to read.

It was half-past eleven when Barnum left the Hotel Richelieu.

It was more than half-past twelve when a knock on the door announced Lemons' return.

"Well?" demanded Dan, eagerly. "What luck?"

"Bully! I've seen Pete."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"Then you were right."

"I knowed him as soon as ever I seen him from the Randolph street cars yesterday, Marse Dan."

"Where did you find him?"

"He's driving his hack just as I saw him then."

"The number?"

"544, Marse Dan."

"At last!" cried Dan, seizing his hat. "Lemons, you're a brick. Follow me!"

They left the hotel together by a side entrance, thus attracting no special attention. Lemons led the way up to the corner of Madison and Clark streets, thence on to Washington street.

"Hope to Heavens he ain't gone!" murmured Dan.

"No fear," chuckled Lemons.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I heard the man tell him to wait until one o'clock."

"Good! It's only ten minutes to one now."

"Dat's what I say! Dere he is!"

Dan paused.

In front of a noted saloon, opposite the City Hall, stood an ordinary hack, the driver seated upon the box.

"Dat's him!" breathed Lemons. "Dat's de feller! You didn't catch a good look at his face when you seen him in dat house in Albany, Marse Dan, but it am Pete for suah!"

"All right, Lemons, I'll trust you. Now go! You know what to do."

"Marse Dan."

"Well?"

"Don't run dis big risk. Dey may get de best ob you. Call a policeman; get a detective——"

"Nonsense, Lemons! I'll do nothing of the sort, and all you've got to do is to obey!"

"Golly! I'll do dat anyhow; but don't you go for to get yourself into no trouble. Gee! If you only knowed how bad I felt when I thought you was drowned dat night in Lake Erie——"

"Well, I turned up all right, didn't I?"

"You did, but——"

"But found you running about among the boatmen like a wild boy, trying to get someone to lend you a boat so that you could come out on the lake and look for me, instead of going to the circus and reporting what had happened, as any sensible fellow would have done."

"Golly, Marse Dan, I s'pecs I was most looney dat time."

"There, there! Get along! Jolly him for all you are worth and stick by me, of course."

"Don't you forget dat, Marse Dan."

Away went Lemons.

Dan watched him and saw him enter into conversation with the driver.

At first it seemed likely that there was going to be a row. For the driver jumped off the box and caught Lemons by the collar.

But the little darky pulled himself nimbly away, and continued to talk.

The attack was not renewed.

After observing them for a few minutes Dan became satisfied that things were working as he wanted them to work.

He accordingly slipped into the other hack and



by a side door, first removing the false beard and mustache which he had worn in the ring.

In spite of the lateness of the hour the place was in full blast, and fairly well crowded.

Dan, with his hat over one eye, staggered up to the bar, and displaying a big roll of bills ordered a drink.

Of course, all eyes were upon him in a moment.

It was only by watching his chance that he found opportunity to dispose of the vile stuff in the cuspidore instead of down his throat.

After a moment he went over to a table, and sat down, resting his head on his hands and pretending to sleep.

"Come, look here, young feller, this won't do!" exclaimed the proprietor, coming up and shaking him. "You'll have to get out of here."

Dan retorted thickly.

Words followed.

He was seized by the collar and hustled toward the door.

But before he reached the door it opened and Pete the driver stepped in.

His eyes fixed themselves upon Dan with an evil leer.

"Come, Mr. Lewis. Come, your carriage is all ready," he said, taking Dan's arm.

"Is he a fare of yours?" demanded the saloon-keeper.

"Yes, he is."

"Course I am," muttered Dan.

"Then take him away blame quick. I'm not going to have him robbed in my place if I know it."

The driver took Dan's arm and led him out.

There was Lemons sitting on the box holding the horses.

Pete opened the door and was just about to help Dan in when a man came bustling up.

Dan's heart beat quickly.

On the instant he recognized the man as Herr Klinkenfels.

But the would-be strong man did not recognize him as the same person who had brought him to shame in the ring at Barnum's show.

"What in the world are you about? Who's this?" he demanded, speaking in excellent English.

"Look!" whispered Pete.

There was apparently no danger in speaking out before Dan, for his head had fallen forward upon his breast, and he was swaying from side to side.

No one would have guessed that he was not as drunk as he seemed.

"By jove, you don't mean it?" breathed Herr Klinkenfels, peering into the boy's face.

"You see."

"Where did you find him?"

"In there."

"This is downright luck! While we are plotting and planning to get the best of the fellow here he walks right into our hands."

"Hush! Get him in if you mean to take him. We are attracting attention here."

This was a fact.

Several men had come out upon the sidewalk, and were watching them, while others crowded at the door.

"That's all right," said Herr Klinkenfels. "In with him. Pete, there never was such luck as this!"

They tumbled Dan into the hack, and Herr Klinkenfels followed.

Two gentlemen who happened to be passing stopped to see what was going on.

"Here! Say! What does this mean?" cried one. "Where are you taking that boy?"

"Out of the way and mind your own business!" cried

And pushing the gentleman roughly to one side, he leaped upon the box, caught the reins from the hands of Lemons, and started the hack up Washington street at full speed.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE PLOT DISCLOSED.

"It was!"

"Are you sure?"

"Hoot mon! Don't tark to me! Dinna ye think I ken the boy Sandow? It's Dan Lewis, or I'll eat my head!"

The two gentlemen who had come up just as hack No. 544 drove away from in front of the Washington street saloon stood staring after the retreating vehicle.

Their interest in the matter is easily understood, when we state that one was Mr. McTavish and the other Joe Moss, the detective attached to the Greatest Show on Earth.

The crusty Scotchman showed his excitement by promptly dropping into his native dialect.

Joe Moss was entirely incredulous when the manager suddenly asserted that the young man they had seen lifted into the hack was Dan.

"If I know anything," persisted McTavish, "it was the boy, and if that's not enough, wasn't that young nigger on the box?"

"By jove, Lemons!" cried Moss. "You are right."

"What does it mean?"

"I'll soon know!"

He left McTavish abruptly and slipped into the saloon.

In a moment he was back again, showing his excitement on his face.

"There's something wrong here, Mac!" he exclaimed.

"What do you mean?"

"That fellow was loaded with money and whisky as well."

"Ah!"

"I believe in my soul he has fallen into the hands of a couple of skins, and so does the bartender in there who is an old friend of mine."

"What's to be done?"

"What we ought to have done in the first place—follow that hack."

But it was rather late to attempt that now.

McTavish and the detective had to go as far as the corner of La Salle and Randolph streets before they found a hack.

Fortunately the driver was able to assist them.

He had seen hack No. 544 pass him.

"It went up Randolph at a rattling pace, gentlemen," he said. "It's my opinion it was heading for the west side."

"Ten dollars if you overhaul it!" cried McTavish, excitedly.

"It's a go! In with you!"

A moment later and the manager and the detective were rattling off toward the Randolph street bridge, little guessing that Dan was doing the detective act himself.

But so far it had been rather a stupid business for Dan.

He was lying all doubled up in one corner of the vehicle, pretending to be in a sleep.

Beside him sat Herr Klinkenfels smoking.

Out of the corner of his eye Dan watched him.

There was no doubt in his mind that the man was Myrtice.

And this in the light of what Dan already knew meant that he was the son of old Mr. Maybrick, for Dan had often heard that Mr. Maybrick had a son who had run very wild and was supposed to have gone on the stage.

Now this was all very well as far as it went, but it did



not in the least explain the mysterious actions of this man. For light on this point Dan had to wait.

During the best part of an hour the hack rattled west.

Reaching the end of Randolph street, Pete struck off upon an unpaved street which took them a long distance out on the prairie.

When the halt came at last it was before the gate of rather a dilapidated old house which stood back from the road surrounded by trees.

By Pete's order Lemons jumped down and opened the gate and the hack drove into the yard.

Mybrico was out in an instant.

"Well," demanded Pete, "how is it?"

"He's dead drunk."

"You've got him this time, sure."

"You bet! Until he's signed he'll never leave this place, and it's doubtful if he does it then. Here, help me carry him in."

Pete ran up the steps, and opening the door with a night key, returned to take Dan by the shoulders while Mybrico managed his feet.

Meanwhile Lemons sat on the box like an ebony statue.

Dan was taken into a large room, not badly furnished, and laid out upon a lounge.

"It will be a couple of hours before he comes to his senses like enough," remarked Mybrico. "Don't you think you had better drive the hack back to the stable?"

"No."

"But we may have been followed. It would help to turn the scent."

"Pshaw! There's no danger. I'll put the horses in the barn and the hack under the shed; there ain't one chance in a million that we've been followed."

"And the boy?"

"Oh, we can use him. We've got to have some one here to look after our prisoner now that Bill is gone."

"All the same, I think you made a mistake taking up with him."

"Nonsense! He's as completely under my thumb as ever. The young rascal would do anything for money. When he first spoke to me it was his own offer to betray his master. I tell you, he's a perfect young Judas. Oh, I know him well, and seeing that he's kept his part of the bargain, there's no reason why I shouldn't keep mine."

"Oh, all right. Hurry up; I want to get things quieted down."

Pete vanished, returning again in about ten minutes.

"Say, Pete," exclaimed Mybrico, as he entered the room, "this is great luck, ain't it?"

"I should say so. Hope you won't make a botch of it this time."

"Don't you fret."

"Hadn't you better tie his hands while you have a chance? He may wake up all of a sudden and then we'll be in the soup."

"Tie nothing! Show me the rope he wouldn't break. No, sir, a cocked revolver at his head will do the business; leave me alone for that."

"Sure he hasn't got one, too?"

"He had—he hasn't now."

"Oh, you've touched him?"

"Just did it. This is what I got."

"A bang-up Smith & Wesson."

"Yes."

"Gold-mounted, too, 'by jove! Why, the fellow is a regular prince of the blood."

"I can't imagine for the life of me how he came to have so much money."

"You relieved him of his pile?"

"Oh, yes."

"How much?"

"Over a thousand."

"It's blamed mysterious."

"Ain't it? If he'd come into his property now——"

"Say, explain about this property business, will you? I don't more than half understand it yet."

"Why, it's plain enough. You see, this fellow is my own cousin, the son of my father's sister, but he doesn't guess that."

"Was he never told?"

"No."

"And why?"

"Oh, my father is blamed peculiar. He kept the boy in ignorance, hoping that he might die, in which case the property all comes to me."

"But I don't see——"

"Never mind now what you see and what you don't see. The governor had his plans, and would have carried them out in time, I suppose. You see, he made me sign over all my interest in the Lewis estates to him some two years ago, and——"

"For what?"

"Do you want to know?"

"Of course."

"To keep me out of states prison, that's for what."

"Ah, I see! He had a hold over you."

"I was fool enough to write his name at the bottom of a big check one day."

"I see. And that check and the paper you signed were the articles you were after the night you robbed the old man's safe and found out how strong this young Sandow was?"

"Right again, Pete. You've hit it!"

"But about this property?"

"Why, it's just this. My aunt inherited a lot of land right here in the city of Chicago from her husband, who died of smallpox when Dan was about three weeks old."

"Chicago lots, eh?"

"Yes, and mighty valuable ones now, you bet. My aunt never knew how valuable, for she only lived a year after her husband, but that was long enough for her to make the will I spoke of. It gives all to Dan, or at his death to me, and what I propose is to have him sign a bill of sale of all his right, title and interest in the property. With that in my possession, I— Great heavens! The boy's awake!"

For Dan suddenly sat bolt upright on the lounge.

"Where am I?" he muttered, thickly. "Who are you fellers? Say, let's have another drink."

"Now's our time!" breathed Pete. "Get your documents ready, old man. He'll sign anything now, even if you ask him to sign away his own soul."

## CHAPTER XX.

### LEMONS SEES THE DEVIL.

While all this was going on upstairs Lemons was mighty busy downstairs.

Shrewd Lemons!

His eyes were ever open.

Ditto his ears which were large enough and sharp enough to take in all that was going on around him every time.

A remark dropped by Pete had set Lemons to thinking.

"It's the same here as it used to be in Albany, Lemons,



only if you work well and hold your tongue I'll see that you lose nothing by it. You'll be no slave this time, boy; no sleeping in the cellar and living on scraps. We leave that for some one else."

This is what Pete had said while they were driving over to the west side.

Lemons took it all in and said nothing.

In his previous conversation with Pete, who he had tracked out with all the persistency of a young sleuthhound, Lemons pretended to be very much down on Dan.

He made up a story to fit the occasion, and promised to betray his master into the hands of the enemy.

But not a hint did Lemons give that threw the least light on the mystery of Dan's suddenly acquired wealth.

After Lemons helped put the horses up, Pete opened a door in the rear and led the boy into the kitchen of the old mansion.

"You stay here now," he ordered. "Make yourself at home. You'll find plenty of grub in the closet and you can sleep on that old lounge till I call you, which won't be till to-morrow. You've done a good night's work for us, Lemons, and I shall see that you are rewarded well."

Lemons grinned and showed his teeth.

"All right, marse, I'se satisfied so long as I git plenty ob grub, plenty ob sleep and a dollar to spend now and den."

"You'll get more than that, boy, don't you fret. You stand by me and I'll stand by you."

Thus saying, Pete returned to Mybrico in the room above.

Perhaps he would not have felt so sure of Lemons' fidelity could he have looked through the door the moment it was closed.

Lemons' left thumb was pressed against the end of his nose with the fingers spread apart to their widest extent.

"You mean skunk!" he muttered. "It's the same here as it used to be in Albany, is it? Well, den dere ought to be a blamed old queer-making shop in de cellar ob dis house somewheres, if I know what's what!"

Having jumped at this conclusion, Lemons immediately proceeded to prove it by prowling around until he found the cellar door.

Lighting a small lamp which he found on the kitchen mantelpiece, and arming himself with a hatchet discovered in the wood box, Lemons set out on a tour of exploration.

The first thing he did was to cautiously unscrew the lock on the cellar door with the edge of the hatchet.

This accomplished, he opened the door and stole carefully down the rickety stairs.

The cellar in which he now found himself was a large one and filled with all sorts of rubbish.

There was nothing to show that anyone had visited it in years to eyes less sharp than Lemons'.

But the shrewd little darky was not to be deceived.

"By golly, things are just as dey used to be in Albany," he muttered, and away he went winding in and out among the boxes and barrels.

For to Lemons it seemed as if a regular path had been left among the rubbish, although everything appeared to be in the greatest disorder.

In a moment he brought up against the north wall of the cellar, which was built of rough blocks of lime stone, separated at two points by heavy wooden partitions which looked to Lemons like doors set in the wall.

"Dere dey is!" he muttered. "I knowed it! Dere's de queer shop! By golly, I wonder if Missy Astra is down here?"

Lemons flashed the light against one of the supposed doors. Everything was arranged as it was in Albany, then this

door ought to open by means of a hidden spring of very peculiar construction which Lemons perfectly understood.

The boy ran his hand over the wood.

"Ah, I knowed it!" he muttered. "Here it is!"

Suddenly the door moved inward.

But when Lemons looked in he could see nothing but a vacant room.

All that he could discover was a furnace and certain curious looking tools.

"Dey must hab made queer coins here onct," thought Lemons, "but it was long ago. I'll try de odder one and see what luck I hab dere."

The second door opened in the same way as the first.

Lemons started back with a glad cry, for as the door flew inward a woman suddenly rose up before him.

Her face was wild and haggard, her clothing such as would have shamed a beggar, but for all that, Lemons knew her at a glance.

"Missy Astra!" he gasped. "Oh, I'se so glad I'se found you! And Marse Dan—won't he be glad, too!"

The girl stared wildly.

"Go away!" she muttered. "You mock me! Dan is dead! Go back to him who sent you and say that it is all useless! I'll never marry him! I'll rot first in this horrible place! I will! Tell him I said so! Go! Go!"

And with every word her voice rose louder until it ended in a shrill shriek.

"She's looney!" thought Lemons.

"Don't you know me, missy?" he said aloud. "I'se Lemons! Look at me! Look at me! Me and Marse Dan hab come to sabe you, 'deed we has!"

"No! No!" screamed the girl, for it was indeed Astra. "I tell you no! Dan is 'dead! You are dead! I wish I was, too!"

"She's way off," muttered Lemons. "What can I do? Oh, I wish Marse Dan would come!"

The thought had scarcely crossed his mind when there was a rustling outside the door.

"Ah!" screamed Astra. "I knew it! There he is! It's the devil come to claim his own!"

Lemons thought so as he sprang into the room with a sharp cry.

For there in the doorway stood a tall figure all in black with a mask of the same somber hue concealing his features.

Behind him was another figure, and still another rigged out in the same way.

"What does all this mean?" demanded the first of the two in low, deep tones. "Where is the traitor who dares to introduce strangers into our secret den?"

A yell from Lemons was the only answer.

For the man in black, with a quick dart forward, caught the unfortunate darky by the hair and lifted him clear off the floor.

"Speak, you dark rascal!" he hissed. "Speak! Who are you?"

At the same instant Astra, with a wild scream, made a dash through the open door.

So sudden was her move that the two men tried in vain to stop her.

Scream after scream rang through the cellar, as the mad-dened girl went dashing off into the darkness and disappeared.

"Stop her—stop her!" cried the man in black, flinging Lemons into a corner. "Stop her! She'll give the alarm! Not for big money would I have those traitors, who have violated the oath of the brotherhood, take warning and escape!"

Now this was all very well as far as it went, but it



## CHAPTER XXI.

## LIVELY WORK FOR DAN.

"Come, sign your name there, Dan, and we'll have another drink."

Mybrico put the pen into Dan's hand, pointing to a blank space upon the legal looking document which lay spread out upon the table.

Pete stood behind him, watching the proceeding, holding a whisky flask and a small glass.

Evidently Mybrico's plans were to succeed finely.

He thought so.

So did Pete.

Neither had the faintest suspicion that Dan was playing 'possum.

There had been some little talk and by-play before the document was produced and the proposition made.

Pete produced the flask and gave Dan a drink when he first revived and called for it, and now came the promise of another if he would but write his name to the paper which was to rob him of his own.

Dan took the pen, and bracing himself against the table, dipped it in the ink.

"I suppose this is all right, boys," he muttered, thickly.

"Certainly it is," replied Mybrico following up the lie he had told. "It is a contract with Barnum for ten years. He wasn't able to come himself, so he sent me. Just put your mark there, my boy."

"No! I'll put it here!" cried Dan, suddenly flinging down the pen. "I'll put it right here."

Like lightning he flung himself upon the two villains, with both hands outstretched.

With his right he caught Mybrico by the throat, while the left closed about Pete's windpipe with a grip which made his eyeballs rattle.

"Great guns, he's onto us!" gasped Mybrico, as he found himself forced against the wall.

"Onto you, yes—onto you every time, you scoundrel! Speak! Where is Astra? Every detail of your plot is known to me, and as sure as there is a heaven above us, I'll throttle the life out of you if you refuse to release that poor girl."

With all his wonderful strength Mybrico struggled, but he never answered a word.

He caught Dan's arm with both hands and tried to pull it away.

Useless effort.

If Mybrico was strong, then Dan was stronger.

He might as well have tugged upon an iron bar.

Before this Pete had gone all to pieces.

Besides choking him into insensibility, Dan raised his foot and gave him a kick which floored him completely.

At the same instant Mybrico managed to jerk himself free.

"Ha! I've got you now!" he hissed, as he threw himself upon Dan.

A terrible struggle followed.

It was strong man against strong man.

But a moment decided it.

Dan triumphed.

Forcing Mybrico against the wall again, he held him in a grip of iron.

"Astra!" he gasped. "Speak! Where is she? I tell you your life ain't worth a rush if——"

Suddenly a wild, piercing scream rang out through the house.

There was a rush of footsteps in the passage outside.

Mybrico's face, red before from exertion, turned deathly pale.

"Lost!" he gasped. "Save me, Dan, if you would save Astra. Don't let them kill me—don't——"

But the sentence was never completed.

For at the same instant the door was rudely burst open, and into the room dashed three masked men.

Instantly Dan let go Mybrico's throat and prepared to defend himself.

It was time.

Without a word the three masks drew revolvers and began firing.

"So you will turn traitor, Maybrick, and violate your oath!" was shouted above the din. "You know the penalty! Die!"

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Shots followed the shouts.

With a groan Mybrico flung up his hands and sank to the floor.

One of the shots struck the lamp, broke it into a hundred pieces, the oil spread over the tablecloth in one sheet of flame.

Now all this was the work of an instant.

The next and Dan's work began.

Utterly regardless of the revolvers, he flung himself upon the three masked men.

Had a cyclone suddenly swept down upon them they could not have been taken more by surprise.

Biff!

Whack!

Bang!

Thud!

Dan struck out right and left.

With each blow of his fist he brought down his man.

For Dan's fists were terrible ones.

Had three sledge hammers struck them the masks could not have dropped quicker than they did.

Dropped and never moved or spoke.

Dropped upon the floor where the carpet, ignited from the burning oil, was now all ablaze, filling the room with a dense, suffocating smoke.

Gasping for breath, Dan rushed to where Mybrico lay and drew him toward the door.

To try to extinguish the fire he saw would be useless.

At the same instant the scream was heard again.

"Dan! Dan! Don't leave me!" moaned Mybrico, seeing Dan making for the door. "It is Astra! Save me—save me!"

For an instant Dan hesitated.

Should he do it?

Should he risk the delay of even a moment to try to save his enemy, while the girl he loved might be in danger even greater than he knew?

"I am your cousin, Dan—your own flesh and blood!" pleaded the wretch. "Don't leave me to be burned alive! I swear to heaven I'll never raise my hand against you again!"

Without a word Dan stooped, and picking up the strong man as easily as if he had been a baby, rushed out into the passage, leaving the unconscious Pete and the three masked ruffians in the burning room.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE BURNING OF THE OLD HOUSE.

"Old house standing alone among trees?"

"Yes."

"Big fence around it?"

"Yes."



"A little way back from the road as you go to the old stone quarries?"

"Yes."

"That's right. I know the place."

"Thank heaven, we've made him understand at last," whispered Manager McTavish to Joe Moss, as the sergeant behind the desk at the Randolph street station turned away to consult a big book.

It had been lively work for McTavish and Moss.

The hackman whom they engaged certainly earned the money.

For although he did not actually overtake hack No. 544, he was able to track it to the old house on the prairie and point out the tracks it had made going through the big gate.

Having ascertained this much, the manager and the detective made him drive them to the police station, for the place looked an ugly one to tackle, and the hackman assured them that it bore an evil name.

This report was confirmed now by the police sergeant.

"Yes, gentlemen," he exclaimed, closing his big book and turning to the desk, "I know the place well. Some two years ago it was the resort of a notorious band of coiners called the Brotherhood of the Silver Spoon. The gang was broken up, and for a time nothing was heard of them, but recently I have been given to understand that some of them have been seen lurking about their old haunts again."

"Do you know the names of these men?" asked Joe Moss.

"Well, there were quite a number of them, but their true names were never learned. One was known as Jim the Pig; then there was another, who went by the name of the 'Sheeney Shover'; he did most of the putting out of the stuff, it was said. The only other one I recall is Sam Maybrick, alias 'Strongarms,' who was said to be an old circus man. He escaped, and I heard he joined some show in the East."

Moss and McTavish looked at each other meaningly.

"Mybrico," whispered McTavish.

"Undoubtedly," breathed Moss.

The result was that a short time later the patrol wagon went dashing up to the mysterious house.

"What in thunder does that light mean in there behind the trees?" exclaimed Joe Moss, as they approached.

They were soon to know.

As they advanced it grew brighter and brighter.

Just as they reached the gate a wild scream rang out upon the still night air.

"Heavens! The house is on fire!" exclaimed McTavish. "Quick, boys! Quick! There's something dead wrong here!"

The time of the arrival of the police was a moment or two after Dan nobly drew his enemy from the burning room.

"Speak, Sam Maybrick!" he breathed. "Speak! Tell me where Astra is hidden? If you love the girl as you claim to love her, you will speak and save her life."

"I—I will! I'm going to!" gasped Maybrick. "It's the cellar. If you will take me down there I will show you. I—"

Suddenly a wild, maniacal shriek rang out from the floor above.

"It's Astra's voice!" gasped Maybrick. "She's upstairs! She has escaped! She has fled to the rooms above!"

That meant death if the fire gained the headway that Dan felt it must.

Instantly he acted.

Unchaining the front door, he opened it and lifted his helpless cousin out upon the piazza.

"Stay there! I'll be back in a minute! I must save her!" he cried, hurrying back again and dashing up the stairs.

He had scarcely reached when the room door opened and

out rushed one of the masks, dragging with him his two companions, who still remained unconscious.

Out upon the piazza he dragged the two men just as the rattling of wheels began to be heard upon the road.

"Some one coming!" he muttered, dropping his burden.

"Ha! Sam Maybrick! This is your work!" Suddenly his eyes rested upon the wounded strong man with a look of malignant hate.

"Help! Save me, Dan! Save me!" yelled Maybrick, trying to rise.

At the same instant the wheels stopped at the gate.

"Murder—murder!" was the cry which now rang out.

Down the gravel walk several men came hurrying.

All but two wore the uniform of the Chicago police.

And their arrival was not one moment too soon.

For by the opening of the outer door the flames had been given new life.

The room was now blazing fiercely.

The stairs were all on fire, and the flames were sweeping through the hall.

"By heavens, what's this?" cried the sergeant who had joined in the raid.

"It's Maybrico! Dead!" gasped McTavish.

"But these two fellows are not dead," said the sergeant, tearing away the masks from the two silent forms which lay upon the piazza near the body of Mybrico.

"If I know anything, these men still live; they are breathing; they— Great guns! This is Jim the Pig, and here's the Sheeney Shover. Carry them to the wagon, boys. Don't let them escape. Remember the big reward that's on their heads."

Suddenly they heard a voice calling to them to go around to the other side of the house.

"It's Dan," said McTavish.

They leaped from the piazza and hurried to the side of the house.

Now they saw him.

In an upper window stood Dan Lewis as calm and collected as ever.

In his arms he held Astra, easily recognizable now in the light.

"Dan! Oh, Dan!" cried the manager.

"That you, Mr. Mac?"

"Yes, yes."

"See, I've found Astra. Help me to save her. Have you got a ladder, a rope—anything?"

"No, no! We have nothing! Oh, what can be done?"

"We can look—we'll try!" cried Joe Moss.

"No; there's no time to waste," shouted Dan. "Stand ready! I shall have to drop her down!"

Lifting Astra out through the window as lightly as though she had been an infant, he bent down as far as he could reach, holding the girl under the arms.

"I'm going to drop her now!" he called. "Look out! Catch her, somebody!"

Then he let go, and Joe Moss did the rest, catching the unconscious girl about the waist and lowering her tenderly to the ground.

"Good!" cried Dan. "Say, have you seen anything of my boy Lemons?"

"No, no! Don't stop for anything!" cried McTavish. "Jump and save yourself, Dan!"

Dan drew back.

Suddenly a thunderous crash was heard inside the burning house.

All in an instant Dan vanished, while out through the window burst a sheet of flame.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## ALIVE OR DEAD?

"It's all we can do here."

From the moment of Dan's disappearance in that upper room, nothing had been seen or heard of him.

To suppose the boy to be alive in that fiery furnace was to hope against hope.

One of the first acts of the firemen upon their arrival was to drag from the room where the fire had started the corpse of the man Pete, for they broke open the window here and found the body the first thing.

Like Mybrico, Pete was found stabbed to the heart, clearly proving, when the matters came to be investigated, that the masked man who first recovered, and who upon being captured next day, proved to be none other than the notorious counterfeiter, Jim the Pig, had stabbed both men.

But this was all the firemen accomplished, for to save the house was quite out of the question.

Feeling that they could do no more, McTavish and Moss returned to the city with Astra, who still remained unconscious.

Their journey was a sorrowful one, for they had given up all hope of ever seeing Dan again.

Yet they were mistaken.

Dan was not dead—not even harmed.

The fact is, the old house was full of trap-doors and secret passages.

One of these trap-doors happened to be right under the window, and Dan was standing upon it when he lowered Astra down.

The fastening was old and rusty and gave way beneath his weight, while the draught of air thus created sent the flames out of the window with a rush.

It was this lucky fall that saved Dan.

Down he went, landing upon an old mattress, which fortunately was soft enough to break the force of his fall.

"Oh, oh, oh! What's dat? De debbil again? Oh, don't tech me! I'se nobody! I'se willing to do just what you say!" cried a voice out of the darkness as Dan scrambled to his feet.

"Lemons!"

"Marse Dan!"

"For heaven's sake, what have I struck? Where have I tumbled to? Where are you, Lemons? Where are you?" Dan gasped.

For it was pitch dark, and he could see nothing.

But all in instant he felt the boy's hands upon him.

"Hooray! Hooray! It's all right now!" shouted the boy, jumping about like mad, still clutching Dan's coat.

"Quiet! Quiet! Lemons!" cried Dan. "Don't you know that the house is on fire? If our lives are to be saved we must get out of this."

"Fire! I tought so! I knowed I smelled smoke. Oh, Marse Dan, have you seen——"

"Astra—yes! She is safe."

"Thank de Lord!"

A few further words of explanation followed, but as they covered ground with which we are already familiar, they need not be repeated here.

The place into which Dan fell was the room where Astra had been confined.

Luckily for Dan, he was well provided with matches.

Thus he was able to find the door.

Though to all appearance wood, it was actually iron, and as firm as a rock.

"You can't nebbber open it, Marse Dan—nebbber in de world!"

"You think so?" cried Dan. "Wait and see!"

He seized an iron ring which hung below the lock and pulled with all his strength.

In came the door, the bolts, and half the partition with it. Lemons, who failed to get out of the way, was knocked flat, but bounded to his feet like a rubber ball.

Through the door a dense, suffocating smoke came pouring, and the roar of the flames could be heard above.

"The stairs!" gasped Dan. "Where are they, Lemons? Quick, boy, quick! We'll be stifled in less than ten seconds in this place!"

For a moment they groped about.

But they could not find the stairs.

Denser grew the smoke, the air was hot and suffocating. That they could not thus live many minutes Dan plainly saw.

"Where are they, Lemons? What shall we do?" he gasped. "These matches amount to nothing in such gloom as this!"

"Tain't no use looking, Marse Dan!"

"But we must! Be brave, Lemons! We can't give it up so!"

"Hold on, Marse Dan! Nobuddy's talking 'bout gibbin' up nuffin! Oh, no!"

"What then, boy? Speak!"

"Dere's de way de debbil came."

"Ah! Those men——"

"Yes."

"But you didn't see them come?"

"No, but Pete says to me 'it's all here just like it is in Albany,' he says, an' if dat's so, den I know a way out!"

"Then, for heaven's sake, lose no time in finding it, Lemons, for— Ah! Too late! Too late!"

For at the same instant a large section of the floor above their heads fell into the cellar with a loud crash, scattering sparks and burning brands in every direction.

Dan and Lemons just dodged it and no more.

In a twinkling the rubbish which filled the cellar was in a blaze.

And Dan and Lemons?

Were they alive or dead?

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## CONCLUSION.

"Dear me, Mac, this is terrible—terrible!" exclaimed Mr. Barnum, leaning back in his chair and putting out both hands before him as though to ward off some blow.

But the blow was not to be warded off thus.

It had already fallen.

Now McTavish had gone over the whole story very rapidly.

It was so wild and strange that the great showman could scarcely credit it yet.

"And you say that Joe Moss has positively learned that that rich young fellow, Myron Strong, is the same as our young Sandow?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, that's sure."

"Strange. Yet I can believe that better than some of the rest."

"Oh, it's all plain, sir. You see, this fellow Maybrick, or Mybrico, as we know him, turned out to be not so dead as we thought he was. He revived at the station and made a full confession. In fact, he was still alive at last accounts."

"Well, well! What did he say?"

"Said that Dan was his cousin, and that it was all along of some property that he was persecuting him."

"I know! I knew Dan's father years ago. I've had the lawyers at work on it. The boy is the son of my friend Captain Lewis; the property is here in Chicago and very valuable, but that don't account for his riches now."

"Mybrico knows nothing of that, I tell you."



things. Among others that Budd West worked with him, that he cut the rope that night Dan fell; that he helped to abduct him from the tent and carry him to a lonely hut on the lake front at Sandusky the night of the tidal wave; but I've told you all about that, Mr. Barnum, and——"

"And you needn't tell it again, Mac. I'll see that West is taken care of."

"He has skipped off."

"Confound it! I'll put the detectives on his track. I'll run him down. How is M'lle Astra to-night, Mac?"

"Much better. The hospital doctors say she will pull through all right."

"Well, well! There's no use talking any further about it. Our show can't stop, no matter what has happened; has Herr Klinkenfels shown up?"

McTavish laughed aloud.

"Bless you, Herr Klinkenfels was nobody but Mybrico in disguise."

"You don't mean it!"

"Yes; the man was crazy to do Dan's act, and wouldn't give it up until he had lifted the platform——"

"Then I have no strong man to-night?"

"None!"

"The boy can't be dead. He promised me last night that he'd be on hand to lift the platform, and something seems to tell me that he will keep his word."

McTavish stared.

"You saw him last night, Mr. Barnum?"

"No, but I called at his hotel, and that is the word he sent me down."

"Ah, but that was before——"

"I don't care what it was before or what is was after. I have faith in that same young Sandow. Get the platform ready, Mae. As I said before, something seems to tell me that Dan will be on hand."

Now to Manager McTavish this seemed the merest nonsense, but Barnum's will was law.

The big tent was packed to its utmost capacity that night.

The Grand Triumphal Procession of all Nations was a huge success.

The tumbling, the bareback riding, the trapeze performances were all greeted with the usual applause.

With a heavy heart Mr. McTavish caused the platform to be brought into the ring.

"It is all fule's wark, Mr. Barnum," muttered the manager, as the platform was brought in.

"What if I had received a letter within twenty minutes saying— Ah! I knew it! Look there! Put your men on the platform, Mae! Quick! Quick!"

Down the center aisle a well dressed young gentleman was hurrying, followed by a little colored boy in a suit of gorgeous livery.

"Dan! Lemons!" gasped McTavish. "Thank God!"

"Restrain yourself, Mac. To work! To work!" breathed Barnum.

And as the pair leaped over the rope, he simply nodded and smiled, but never said a word.

The platform was on the horses now.

McTavish leaped upon it.

So did the clown. So did the bareback rider; so did four others who stood ready.

As the young man advanced, he suddenly flung off his clothes as though they were all one piece, and stood clad in tights and spangles.

Seizing the colored boy, he raised him on the palm of his right hand and tossed him upon the platform.

Then, putting himself in position, he raised the big board on his shoulders with all seven men upon it, and walked

out into the ring, while the big tent rang with thunderous applause.

As for Barnum, he could restrain himself no longer.

"I knew it! I knew it! I knew my young Sandow would not fail!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Yes, Barnum knew it because Dan had sent him a note by a special messenger, telling him that he would be on hand.

But that night, after the performance, when Dan told his story in the green room he declared that it was all owing to Lemons that he was able to keep his promise.

For things were arranged in the Chicago den of the Brotherhood of the Silver Spoon as they had been in the den at No. 9 Briggs street, Albany, which house belonged to the self-same gang.

Thus Lemons was able to lead Dan out of the cellar by a secret way which landed them in the old limestone quarry, about forty yards in the rear of the burning house.

Then came the day of Dan's triumph.

Aided by Mybrico's confession and the lawyers employed by Barnum, Dan was able to prove his claim to his father's estates in due time.

And this was made all the easier by the sudden death of old Mr. Maybrick at Belleford.

Before he died the old man relented and made a full confession, which helped matters along amazingly.

It was on the very day that Sam Maybrick left the hospital that Dan came into his property.

It amounted to almost half a million.

This added to the gold Dan found on the island made him a very rich man.

But it did not turn his head a bit.

Of course he left Barnum's employ eventually, but it was not until after a year of continuous success in the exhibition of his wonderful strength.

Of course Dan married M'lle Astra long before that year was over. It is hardly to be supposed that he would do otherwise, and the fact that the fair equestrienne was somewhat his senior made no difference at all.

In due time the three counterfeiters were tried and sentenced to Joliet on long terms.

If it could positively have been proved that Jim the Pig put the knife into Pete, he would no doubt have been hung.

But this proving impossible, he went to prison with the rest.

Such also would have been Sam Maybrick's fate had not Dan relented.

He refused to appear again his cousin, and as Budd West was never found, these two scoundrels escaped the punishment they so richly deserved.

For Dan was satisfied.

And why should he not be?

He had plenty of money, a good wife, a faithful friend in Lemons, who has never left him; and last, but not least, a most enviable professional reputation as Barnum's Young Sandow, the Strongest Boy in the World.

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